1-1-2001

Social capital and rural development: An exploratory case study of a failed recreational trail project

Corene Michelle Bregendahl
Iowa State University

Social capital and rural development:

An exploratory case study of a failed recreational trail project

by

Corene Michelle Bregendahl

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Rural Sociology

Major Professor: Vernon D. Ryan

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2001

Graduate College

Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Corene Michelle Bregendahl

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is a culmination of contributions made by a variety of people. I would first like to thank my major professor, Vern Ryan, not only for his insightful substantive critiques regarding this work, but also the way in which he delivered them. Both his tact and sense of humor made the whole graduate student process an enjoyable and memorable experience. Without his presence, the process would not have been nearly as much fun or half as rewarding. I would also like to express gratitude to the other members of my committee, Terry Besser and Elisabeth Hamin, for their suggestions and probing questions into this research.

In addition, I would also like to recognize the contributions made by Jan Flora, Nicole Grewe, and Kerry Agnitsch as members of the NRI research group. By discussing some of the more general issues in the community of Meadville, each contributed to the development of this thesis. In addition to providing research support, Kerry also patiently answered questions I often had about statistics while encouraging my interests in qualitative research methods. I also owe a special note of thanks to Nicole for providing an endless source of laughter and ribbing in relation to our inadvertent hour-long reconnaissance of I-80 during our first research trip to Meadville. Thanks to Jan for providing the faulty cell phone that occupied our attention in the car, thus taking the blame for this egregious navigation error.

Finally, I would like to extend a note of appreciation to my family for their support, as well as my husband, Kristjan, for bringing me to Iowa. My life is much enriched for it.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rural sociologists have long been occupied with the unique challenges facing rural communities based on the assumption that conditions in these areas require different development policies than those in urban areas. In comparison with cities, rural communities are characterized by less densely populated areas and different physical terrains. In addition, the social terrain may be a significant departure as well. Lacking many of the financial and human capital resources often drawn to large metropolitan areas, rural areas are faced with different kinds of opportunities for development. As a result, rural sociologists have turned to an emphasis on strengthening the social conditions in rural areas as a resource for development. In order to build social resources for community use, the processes that build or degrade rural social cohesion must first be understood.

This research is an attempt to do just that. Until those processes and some of the obstacles encountered along the way are understood, it is unlikely that meaningful and informed decisions can be reached to help bring about positive change in rural communities. By examining circumstances of one community development project in rural Iowa, this thesis uses the case study approach to identify the web of relations that impact community politics. On a more narrow level, this thesis addresses what Massey (1994) calls "impediments to collective action in a small community" to learn from one community entrenched in a quiet battle of wills over a proposed bike trail and its implications for rural development policy.

Meadville and the Controversy

Faced with competition from large-scale, corporate farms, Iowa communities dependent on the viability of small family farms are struggling to survive. Some rural communities are therefore considering alternative forms of economic development that can protect and sustain their way of living. Capitalizing on their natural resource base and employing economic strategies to improve amenities and quality of life features, some rural Iowa communities are turning toward the development of recreational tourism. In late 1998, "Meadville," a county seat and incorporated community of roughly 1700 residents with high

social capital, began discussions on the possibility of constructing a multi-use trail through town along an old abandoned railroad corridor. Justifications for the trail included providing a safe route for pedestrians who had taken to the streets because of ill-maintained sidewalks, an opportunity for residents to improve their health, and an economic magnet to attract visitors and potentially new residents to town. It was envisioned to be the first step in a grander scheme for a countywide recreational complex. Spurred by the lobbying efforts of a prominent professional, local governments (including the city council and county board of supervisors) at the outset seriously considered the project on the condition that outside funding through state and federal grants could be secured.

Local reactions to the proposal were mixed. While some community residents supported the project, a growing body of landowners adjacent to the route did not. Two sides thus emerged from the controversy—those promoting the trail at its suggested location, and those opposing it at its proposed location. Both sides, however, claimed to support the project in principal. Project proponents waited quietly for the discord to blow over, but were dismayed to hear some of the landowners and even a local church with land interests along the route speak out against the proposed trail. City and county government officials frequently found themselves caught in the middle.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Regardless of the final decisions made by local governments and communities to support or oppose controversial issues like Meadville's bike trail proposal, little is known about the social and political negotiations that influence the decision-making process. The assumption frequently adopted is that with a democratic system of checks and balances, the public good will be realized. However, the social consequences of voicing an opinion on a controversial issue in small, close-knit communities become obstacles in the highly politicized and sometimes personalized process of local governance. These obstacles can erect significant barriers to "public good" projects, where public good projects are defined by the nature of access in which no group of resident among the general public can be barred from using the resource. In fact, the general welfare is not always served because *public*

policy becomes *private* policy that can be maneuvered by a few. The rationalization for certain decisions of local governments may have less to do with the logic, facts, or merits of issues than it has to do with the social environment in which those decisions are made. In order to maintain high levels of social integration, homogeneity of thought may thus be the ultimate (suppressive) factor driving policy.

Despite the public obligation of local administration to protect the general welfare of the community, the real, private consequences of making decisions on controversial issues cannot be ignored. While we expect public discourse to lead to effective public policies to which local governments will adhere, what takes place in public debate may have little effect on the final decision in a community like Meadville as long as there is minimal opposition and high social capital. Herein lies the research problem.

The fundamental assumption of this thesis is that projects in a high social capital community are expected to succeed as dense networks and trust lead to strong norms of reciprocity that promote prescriptive public interests over and above private interests. As a result, the effects of high social capital would overcome controversy in a manner conducive to the public good, leading to the eventual implementation of the project. However, results from this research suggest otherwise.

Research questions this thesis will address include: What are the social constraints, challenges, and consequences of residents taking sides in a controversial project in a close-knit, rural community? When issues of a potential common good conflict with private concerns within a community having strong, collectively oriented sentiments, how is individual resistance justified within that specific social context? What is the nature of opposition in a high social capital community, and likewise, what form and direction does it take? Whose interests do local governments serve and what are the resulting policy implications? What are some of the costs to small communities for having high levels of social capital? Stated otherwise, what are some of the downsides of high social capital?

Objectives

The primary objective of this thesis will be to link social context with processes and outcomes on matters of public interest. Data collected in Meadville suggest that failure of the bike trail project was not inevitable. Community and event characteristics influence patterns of controversy (Coleman, 1957) and the direction of this project. The type of event is important insofar as it "helps determine whether a crisis will unite a community...or cause controversy" (Coleman, 1957:4). Not only is the type of event important in shaping "the nature of the crisis; the kind of community in which it happens is equally important" (Coleman, 1957:4). The combination of these two factors will help explain the pattern of conflict in any community and are used to develop a framework for analyzing the bike trail project in Meadville.

In this thesis, community characteristics are conceptualized in terms of social capital, namely high or strong social capital (i.e., a close-knit community). Social capital is operationalized in terms of the networks and trust that exist within or between members of the community and proponent and opponent group members, as well as the norms of reciprocity that govern their behavior. The type of event is a controversial, internally led recreational development project generating a community response much different than might be generated from such crises as floods or tornadoes (Coleman, 1957). The intersection of a controversial project and a high social capital community with a collective desire to keep the public interest at heart does not ensure success in projects of this type. In fact, they more likely impair projects when private interests are at stake. Like Massey's case study of a small Nova Scotian community embattled over the use of a toxic herbicide in forest management practices, Meadville provides evidence that "personal interdependence can combine with the lack of anonymity characteristic of small communities to make social action a high-risk undertaking" in highly controversial and land management related issues (1994:423).

In response to some of the criticisms leveled against cure-all, elixir theories and development policies (Portes and Landolt, 1996), this research aims to neither exalt nor

condemn, but rather illuminate some of the realities of living in a close-knit, small town. In an age of glorification of the countryside and its attendant bucolic life, the drawbacks of rural living are sometimes glossed over. This research will illuminate some of the unique resource development challenges facing rural areas that are inextricably linked to their social milieus, and how they impact its future viability. The policy implications therefore focus on recognizing the relationship between the social context and rural viability, a topic rural residents, planners, and policymakers can emphasize in their efforts to bring positive change to these areas.

II. SOCIAL CAPITAL CONSIDERED

In this thesis, the social milieu of small communities is framed in terms of social capital. It is not my intent to give a comprehensive summary of the concept of social capital, but rather, to provide an overview and treatment necessary for understanding it as a community level factor important to the process of rural development. Treated as a community level factor instead of an outcome, social capital becomes a cause rather than a consequence, an issue that has emerged frequently in recent critiques of its use in sociological literature (Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996; 2000).

An Individually or Collectively Owned Resource?

Much of the current discussions about social capital are derived from the prominent works of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam, and Portes, as well as a host of others. Bourdieu is usually credited with providing the first systematic discussion of social capital by defining it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of...institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition..." (1986:249). While Bourdieu's definition emphasizes social capital as a collectively owned resource, he concludes that individuals are motivated to join groups to use the collectively owned stock to rationally profit as individuals from the interactions expected from group membership. In essence, investing in social capital eventually translates into accrued individual economic or social benefits. Coleman, too, contends that social capital "inheres in the structure of relations between and among actors" (1998:S98), thus implying the collective characteristic to which Bourdieu referred. And for Coleman, social capital is the avenue through which human capital is acquired—again, a rationalized form of individual pursuit. In contrast to Bourdieu and Coleman, Putnam gravitates from the individual uses of social capital to collective use by referring to social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for *mutual benefit*" (italics added, 1995:67). This makes communities and even nations the beneficiaries of collective stocks of social capital by receiving its effect in the

form of collective outcomes. One example of a beneficial collective outcome is better governance (Putnam, 1995; Portes and Landolt, 2000).

Portes takes issue with Putnam's "conceptual stretch," faulting it for its logical circularity, due to its treatment as both a cause and effect.

> It leads to positive outcomes, such as economic development..., and its existence is inferred from the same outcomes. Cities that are well-governed and moving ahead economically do so because they have high social capital; poorer cities lack in this civic virtue. (Portes, 1998:19)

And while Portes admits to finding the greatest value in the concept of social capital at the individual level as promoted by Bourdieu and Coleman, he concedes there is "nothing intrinsically wrong with redefining it as a structural property of large aggregates" (1998:21). In regard to this debate, this thesis approaches social capital as a community attribute, not an individual one. In the words of Portes, it is treated as a structural property of a large aggregate—an aggregate that comprises an entire community. Furthermore, I am not proposing that social capital itself is the outcome (or effect), but rather the cause—one that is useful in determining an outcome. In accordance with Putnam's description of social capital as a combination of social trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity (1995), the outcome in question is collective action occurring in the form of community development projects (Oliver, 1984). Outcomes are the effect or consequence of social capital where network structure, interaction, and sociability are utilized by the community to foster common cooperation among local groups and individuals for mutual benefit. The cause of these benefits may be attributed to community level social capital.

The rational implication of using the term "capital" is undeniable, linking it to the notion that social capital is a resource to be invested and used. Social capital "provides each of its members with backing of the collectively-owned capital..." (Bourdieu, 1986:249) Because of the idea it can be acquired and maintained through establishing ties with others, this research was carried out with the assumption that the elements comprising social capital could be identified. Once identified, the next step would be to reproduce it in communities where it is lacking, making it a basis for outreach initiatives in rural areas. But as this research will show, social capital is not always a resource—it can also act as a development

drain. Sociologists should therefore reevaluate the promise of social capital as a resource in rural development before going on a construction binge to build social capital in targeted communities without regard to its potential limitations.

The Downside of Social Capital

Although taking distinctly different approaches to the unit of analysis, Putnam and Coleman initially shared the view that social capital was necessarily a public "good" with no mention of its negative consequences. In their critique of the contemporary approach to social capital, Portes and Landolt (1996) scold academicians and policymakers for deifying the concept of social capital. Popular enchantment with the idea and subsequent celebration of its "growing list of wonderful effects" has threatened to eclipse its meaning and social capital as a concept "deserves better" (1996:19). As part of a well-intended effort to strengthen the concept, Portes and Landolt attempt to clarify the concept of social capital by discussing its downsides. Partially in response to criticisms leveled by Portes (1998) and Portes and Landolt (1996; 2000), Putnam has since reconsidered his position and now holds that it can have a bad side, like the one revealed in the Oklahoma City bombing (Putnam, 1998). Less extreme examples of its downsides will be the subject of investigation in this thesis.

One negative implication regards its exclusive nature. The fruits of social capital inhering in interpersonal relationships are not necessarily equally accessible by all. The ability of some community members to make use of social networks to work together for a common, public good necessarily involves the exclusion of certain individuals from participating (Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996). Portes and Landolt (1996) refer to this as "conspiracies against the public" where not everyone is permitted to participate. "The same strong ties that help members of a group often enable it to exclude outsiders" (Portes and Landolt, 1996:19). Additionally, while some individuals gain access to tight networks and reap the subsequent benefits, others do not. Finally, in addition to excluding certain *actors* such as outsiders, social capital may also exclude certain *actions*, a notion remotely discussed by Portes and Landolt (1996; 2000). This second "mixed blessing" of excluding

certain actions is the restriction tight networks can have on individual freedom and initiative. Portes and Landolt (1996) cite norm conformity usually present in small towns as an obstacle to the individual spirit (while not discounting a distinctly American overemphasis on individualism and freedom). The collective's ability to closely monitor and control norm violations among its members stifles divergent ways of thinking, causing the more independent-minded to flee while creating a localized innovation vacuum. The dense, multiplex relationships that bind rural community residents together thus reduce their privacy and autonomy (Portes, 1998), confirming Coleman's claim (1988) that social capital can be useful as a formidable form of social control.

Both types of social capital downsides are evident in Meadville. The strong ties that characterized the trail supporters simultaneously created outsiders, the trail opponents, who alluded to feelings of exclusion from the decision-making process. Yet on the same token, the bike trail—as a project of change and innovation championed by project supporters—threatened to reform the status quo by challenging a tacit (collective) agreement for slow growth and nondisruptive local development. Social capital then led to the exclusion of action. The irony, however, is that conformity was required by those who were highly networked, whereas those who were not highly networked were free to pursue individualistic goals. But the individual freedom that arose from the bike trail project was not the positive, innovative ideal to which Portes and Landolt refer, but one steeped in stagnant tradition.

The Public and Private Good and Bad

The claim that social capital creates insiders and outsiders and does not always lead to positive social outcomes (Portes and Landolt, 2000; 1996; Portes, 1998; Schulman and Anderson, 1999; Wacquant, 1997), in part, concerns the inevitable tension between the public and private good. If individual benefits conflict with the collective benefit expected from a development project, both may lose the opportunity to profit (in one way or the other, perhaps affecting each differently). And if social capital is comprised of trust, ties, and norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 1995), then of utmost importance is the pivotal, prevailing atmosphere of either collective or individual identity in a community. As Coleman readily

admits, "A prescriptive norm within a collectivity that constitutes an especially important form of social capital is the norm that one should forgo self-interest and act in the interests of the collectivity" (Coleman, 1988:S104). Certainly when public and private interests coincide, we expect this to be so. But what happens when public and private interests do not coincide? Is there a difference between the way controversial issues play out in low social capital communities as compared to high social capital communities? Is this prescriptive norm of forgoing self interest missing in Meadville?

One framework appropriate for an examination of the tension between collective and private interests considers a mixture of the egoistic and over-socialized paradigms (Ryan, 1994). In the former, attaining individual goals is regarded as the sole motivation for participation in social networks; in the latter, prescriptive norms dominate and compel individuals losing (or having lost) a sense of self-identity to act in the interests of the group (Ryan, 1994). The strength of collective identity formation is thus important, particularly in cases exhibiting the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome, which is traditionally grounded in place-based, identity-oriented collective action (Miller, 1992). However, in a community characterized by strong social capital, while insiders form a strong sense of collective identity, outsiders may not, at least not with the insiders. As a result, they may disregard or under-emphasize the collective by forming ties with others who share their private good views based on a newly emerging, place-based identity—a development that emerged in the bike trail issue. At the same time, insiders (proponents) were habituated into acting on the will of the collective due to their high level of social integration. Proponents would more freely give up their cause in order to protect the relationships they formed within the collective even if it meant abandoning a public good project.

At this point, a brief discussion of NIMBYism is warranted in relation to the egoistic and over-socialized paradigms. As Brunner (1988) points out, NIMBYists put society at risk because American democracy, "the ideal egalitarian society," promotes an unhealthy dose of individualism that, in turn, breeds a lack of respect for institutions. NIMBYism, the response to siting facilities that everyone wants in principle but would prefer to keep out of their own yards (Inhaber, 1998), is one manifestation of individualism that inevitably ends in a

challenge to public proposals. Its emergence is not limited to public health threats such as nuclear waste storage facilities, toxic waste dump sites, or the odorous nuisance of hog facilities. Other socially unacceptable siting projects suffering from the backlash of NIMBYism include research laboratories, mental health facilities, and group homes for the developmentally disabled (Halstead, Luloff, and Myers, 1993). Although rarely if ever discussed in the NIMBY literature, even the relatively benign undertaking of a recreational trail hails an outcry, and the pattern of opposition seems to be spreading. "During the past year, citizens in cities and towns have met, petitioned, picketed against, and...stalemated efforts to find sites for anything public" (Goldberg, 1987:68). NIMBYism has become a force to contend with in a culture that questions the wisdom of government, a collective arrangement sometimes considered an affront to American ideals of individualism. While we still choose to have government, NIMBYism has become the expression of competition between public and private interests, indeed, the manifestation of the competition between the over-socialized and egoistic paradigms.

Of the seven issues/projects/events recently studied in Meadville, three were provocative enough to elicit community controversy, one of which concerned the proposed bike trail.[1] The trail issue provided a setting in which a few individual interests triumphed over the general welfare of the public. How was this possible in a community with such strong collective sentiments? The picture is not as rosy as it seems. As Miller so candidly remarks,

> Today, to act in the public good means to act for the welfare of individuals in their pursuit of self-fulfillment, not to act for the welfare of a place. And because governments, as the agencies of the public good, cannot themselves provide that inner
>
> peace that is the hallmark of self-fulfillment, we tend today to pressure them to remove social, economic, political, or environmental barriers to its achievement. (1986:357)

---

[1] The others concerned the morality of erecting a proposed beer tent to pay for the cost of a rock band at the town's annual celebration and an issue concerning the transition from city to countywide law enforcement. The beer tent failed. The law enforcement issue stalled but eventually succeeded only after the city police chief resigned.

Miller's words are particularly resonant in the case of Meadville where a breakaway coalition of citizens distinguished by their opposition to the trail eventually paralyzed the project. In congruence with Miller's predictions, the bike trail issue revealed that individuals "live under no obligation to work and sacrifice for a cause or a community except to the extent that the public agenda coincide[s] with [a] current personal agenda for self-fulfillment" (1986:358). Even the presence of high social capital could not overcome the bid for something as harmless as a trail. In fact, high social capital may have contributed to its failure.

Despite an ascendancy of what appears to be an over-socialized paradigm in Meadville, the egoistic paradigm triumphed when personal stakes were high. In contrast, the successes of other projects indicate that the public good benefits in instances where personal costs are low. Apparently, public and private goals are subjected to a reconciliation review process before development projects get the go-ahead, even in high social capital communities. In a notable analysis of community controversy, Smelser's (1967) study of a New England beach town analyzed a dispute over liquor licensing and how the community of 3000 dealt with the resulting social, economic, and political impacts. Like Meadville, the outcome in "Beachtown" was very much tied to the interests of various groups and the cultural context in which those interests operated, addressing notions of rationality and imbeddedness. "Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context... Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations" (Granovetter, 1985:487). The idea of embeddedness is helpful to the extent that it can identify ways in which culture influences norms that, in turn, define acceptable modes of behavior in communities. In Meadville, those norms are oriented toward the community, but not invariably. An embedded approach may prove helpful in determining some limitations of high social capital levels.

III. METHODOLOGY

Any findings presented without a discussion of methods is difficult to interpret. Who the researcher studies, how the subjects are studied, and what techniques are used in the data collection process are all important elements that have a bearing on the conclusions derived from them. It is therefore important to know the processes that drive the research—fundamental aspects that comprise both the research goals and philosophies that influence the direction of analysis. This section will outline the methods and limitations of this research and will set the stage for the appropriate uses of the conclusions contained herein.

Holistic Community Studies

In his summary volume on community studies, Lyon (1989) remarks on the influence holistic community studies have exerted on general sociological knowledge: "No other body of community research is as widely read or cited as these attempts to describe all the interrelated parts of life" (218). He attributes the appeal of holistic studies to the broad and general nature of the subject matter, as well as the "lively, lucid writing style" (1989:229). Primarily because of these two factors, access is gained to these studies by more mainstream audiences. Despite their popular appeal, holistic studies must not be dismissed as mere imitations of science because their scope is broad. While most holistic studies approach community research by relying on intensive description, their goal is science-oriented, by contributing unique perspectives on the understanding of any number of social phenomena. These studies, such as the Lynds' 1929 research in "Middletown," a community in Indiana, are not geared toward testing hypotheses, but rather generating them (Lynd and Lynd, 1929; Lyon, 1989).

> Neither field work nor report has attempted to prove any thesis; the aim has been, rather, to record observed phenomena, thereby raising questions and suggesting possible fresh points of departure in the study of group behavior. (Lynd and Lynd, 1929:3)

While the emphasis may not be on analysis, it can often become a byproduct of the process. Delving into details of social relationship patterns may reveal new questions that further

systematic research, questions that might otherwise be overlooked in the use of more standardized approaches such as quantitative survey research that often quantifies rather than qualifies phenomena.

Furthermore, the tendency to relegate holistic case study approaches to the lower echelons of scientific inquiry must be resisted because of their potential contributions to shaping theory. In some instances, they may provide exceptions that break the rules, leading to theory refinement. Or, they may provide windows into other strands of thought previously unconsidered. Typically, such studies are explorations in community research that tease out issues of significance to the scientific community that have slipped by survey methods. By combining an eclectic methodology through the use of surveys, field research, secondary data sources, or any other number of relevant data collection techniques, holistic community studies employ the use of many resources to help develop a comprehensive community dataset (Lyon, 1989).

In 1958, Vidich and Bensman published a pared down version of the Lynd's approach to Middletown in their descriptive volume of "Springdale," a rural New York community making its cameo in *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community*.[2] The authors do not claim theirs is a holistic study, as there are many facets of social life they leave unexamined; however, one could argue their approach, rather than scope, *is* holistic. They chose to study some of the major issues of (relatively) modern American society—specifically, the relationship between the rural community and a larger influential mass society. Their research is intensely descriptive insofar as they examined social elements they found relevant to their analyses and attempted to situate them in the sociopolitical culture of the community.

Vidich and Bensman also employed an eclectic approach by using data triangulation methods, what they call the use of multiple data sources—including participant observation, interviews, and even gossip—collected during field research. These multiple sources allowed

---

[2] In response to criticism they received for the identifiability of individuals in Springdale, they published a revised edition ten years later in their own defense.

them to develop a complex but admittedly subjective research method that mixed "technique" and "art" to help the researchers assess the meaning of verbal responses within the social context (Vidich and Bensman, 1968).

Salamon is another example of a community sociologist who typically takes a holistic approach. In her studies of rural towns in Illinois, she makes the link between history, ethnicity, and contemporary society. By employing the use of personal interviews and reviews of historical records, she follows the style of the Lynds when describing "Yeoman" and "Yankee" communities. The former is typically of German descent and the latter British. Where Yankee communities are more heterogeneous, tolerant of diversity, and independent, Yeoman communities are more homogenous, less tolerant of diversity, and more oriented to the community (Salamon, 1989).

This thesis is one type of quasi-holistic study. The goal is not statistical inference "to encourage smooth generalizations at the close" (Lynd and Lynd, 1929:3). Hence, statistical tests of significance have not been used. Although such tests could be interpreted and presented to provide evidence for substantive arguments, the writer runs the risk that the reader may inappropriately make generalizations to other communities with different social contexts, rather than theory, from the appearance of such results in the text.

Another argument against the use of statistical tests of significance in this thesis is based on sampling methods—more precisely, the presence of a population. The purposive network sampling methods used to select individuals for study participation means there are no mathematical generalizations to make, no universe to which we can ascribe any characteristics based on the results of our interviews. All we can do is ascribe substantive generalizations to other populations under similar circumstances, an act that can be effectively achieved through descriptive methods. Although Gold (1979) argues for the use of tests of significance for theoretically substantive reasons in nonrandom sampling situations, he also recognizes the limitations of their use in sociology, a field inherently influenced by social context: "A test of significance under the best of circumstances provides only an index of reliability, restricted by time, place, and people" (175). Granted, this means that some shortcomings of the descriptive method exists—principally, that hypotheses are

not tested, nor are measures of reliability. However, the value of such research lies in its use of theory and data triangulation to capture the validity of claims and to raise questions about local community processes that until this point may not have received attention or legitimacy from the scientific community.

A Dialectical Approach

Data for this project were collected in a manner derived from theories about social capital and its measurement. Yet data can often reveal much more than what is sought by pointing analyses and interpretations in new directions. Such was the case for data collected in Meadville. As part of the research project, emphasis was placed on community process in a high social capital community for outreach purposes. If research could pick apart and identify the elements of a high social capital community, perhaps those components could be understood and disseminated for application in areas with low social capital. Induction is thus a large part of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in Meadville. As a result, no hypotheses were introduced at the beginning of the thesis—only research questions to be explored.

Regardless of the absence of hypotheses, theory will not be neglected for its value in providing a general context for understanding the circumstances and events present in the case study community. A dialectical approach to this thesis is appropriate, combining inductive reasoning with deductive logic that has shaped both the direction and tone of this work. Deductive reasoning starts out with general assumptions and then seeks answers or confirmation to those assumptions in the data for support. On the other hand, inductive reasoning such as grounded theory "is a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses," which is essentially "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:2-3). The thesis topic originated from deductive logic, but the analyses and interpretations drawn from the data are decidedly inductive, based on an iterative, dialectical approach that may contribute to the refinement of social capital theory. Wallace (1971) aptly illustrates the theoretical process in a circular diagram where deduction and induction lie juxtaposed within the circle as opposite halves, but each part of the same overall process.

The Case Study

Case studies have been much maligned in sociological literature for their lack of generalizability and ostensibly for their failure to contribute to sociology in the strict, positivistic sense. Some argue that "cases, dealing as they do with individual decisions, lend themselves well to descriptive particularization but ill to conceptual generalization" (Martin et al., 1961:18). Martin further notes that case studies have been found useful "as a means of analysis of administrative behavior in a particular decision-making context" (1961:18). It is commonly agreed case studies do well to describe unique particulars but they can also just as well contribute to *conceptual,* not mathematical generalizations. Hence, the case study of a failed bike trail project, one that blots the record in a community where so many other projects have succeeded, is particularly useful. Analysis of this event is important not only as an example of analyzing administrative behaviors, but also of making conceptual generalizations (why *not* the bike trail while other projects succeeded?).

The value of the case study is not in the typicality of the one selected (which is irrelevant in light of its decidedly non-statistical use in analysis), but rather the extent to which the data support theoretical conclusions (Mitchell, 1983). As a "detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits the operation of some identified general theoretical principle," the case study as the example illustrates more sweeping and abstract principles (Mitchell, 1983:192). Because the case study is not set in a tradition of mathematically based sampling techniques—but rather purposive reasons for selection—does not mean there is nothing to learn from the case study. On the contrary, the strength and value of the case study in the social sciences stem from the uniqueness of the case and the logical, not statistical, inference that emerges from its analysis. As Mitchell explains, "logical inference is epistemologically quite independent of statistical inference" (1983:200). And, unlike statistical inference, case studies rely on the vagaries of specific social situations. These can make them useful in demonstrating the "positive role of exceptions to generalization as a means of deepening our understanding of social processes" (Mitchell, 1983:206). Mitchell contends that citing case studies as analytically inadequate

within the field of sociology confuses enumerative and analytic modes of induction while failing to recognize the very different purpose of the case study technique. That purpose is to consider the total social experience of the case and extract from it explanations and insights to extend them beyond the limited scope of the case for broader, more generalized applications under similar key circumstances.

Event Analysis

As part of his research on community leaders, Freeman (1968) developed an approach to identify community leaders through their involvement in community development projects. In an attempt to determine which approach was better in defining a leader, Freeman compared four methods.[3] To make his comparisons, Freeman selected a set of community problems or issues that would provide him with a point of entry from which to begin his analysis. He identified times when decisions were made on behalf of the community and traced people influential or responsible for those decisions. Freeman chose to follow 39 community issues/events/projects based on specified criteria.

His procedure is often referred to as event analysis, where researchers identify recent community events and determine the people involved in several community issues (Powers, 1967). However, in the case of Meadville, researchers did not determine the people involved. Instead, we relied upon locals to identify known leaders, a process that was substantiated through interviews with a number of "generalists" in the community—people identified as possessing unique knowledge on general community operations, functions, and players.

Event analysis has been criticized for a number of reasons, namely, the failure of the technique to reveal people acting behind the scenes (Powers, 1967). Of course, such an oversight is quite possible in the bike trail project, although it is unlikely due to the dense networks and informational structure of the community that lent itself well to exposing what

---

[3] These methods include the decisional approach in which active participation in decision-making qualifies one as a leader. The second approach is positional, assuming those occupying formal positions are making decisions by virtue of their location in the positional structure. The third involves social participation in volunteer associations. The reputational approach involves quizzing knowledgeable residents to name and rank people with reputed power. See Freeman (1968) for a more detailed description of his methods.

little is left behind the scenes in Meadville. Thus, in some cases, the questionable use of town gossip (Vidich and Bensman, 1968) in research can become a valuable part of the research method, helping identify people playing invisible roles in projects.

Powers (1967) mentions yet another shortcoming of event analysis—that it tends to reveal implementors of decisions rather than initiators. Care was taken to avoid this possibility in Meadville when residents were asked which individuals and organizations *initiated* the project/issue/event as well as those who played a role in its evolution. Newspaper accounts of city council meeting minutes provided yet another source of information on key initiators, and proved the snowball sampling technique in this respect quite reliable.

The Face-to-Face Interviews: Snowball Sampling

In 1994, researchers at Iowa State University randomly selected one rural community from each of Iowa's 99 counties to assess levels of community-based social capital by distributing a mail survey to 150 randomly selected households in the area (boundaries were determined by the telephone exchange). As an extension of the 1994 study, data on locally initiated projects were collected during the summer of 1999 in three of the 99 communities as part of a National Research Initiative (NRI) project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. An important criterion for choosing Meadville as one of the three communities was its high level of community social capital reported by residents in 1994 relative to the other 98 Iowa communities (it ranked in the top quartile). Other factors included its location in the state, demographic features, and measures of entrepreneurial social infrastructure (Flora and Flora, 1993).

In the summer of 1999, a team of six researchers conducted standardized, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix B for a copy of the instrument), ranging in length between one and three hours, with Meadville residents who had been actively involved in at least one of seven community issues, projects, or events. Projects were chosen based on nominations from local informants who were asked to identify recent (within the past three years)

projects, issues, or events that were community oriented in both benefits and participation opportunities. The projects need not have been completed. Among the projects selected was the proposed bike trail. Snowball sampling procedures identified residents for interviews based on their active participation (Freeman, 1968). For all seven projects, 113 residents were nominated and 76 subsequently interviewed (11 refused and 26 were not contacted). The response rate on the seven issues/projects/events was 67%. Eighteen interviews were conducted with individuals nominated for the bike trail project. Having indicated early on an interest in the bike trail for a possible thesis topic, I interviewed 12 of the 18 individuals involved with the project.

Primary project leaders/residents were identified through a number of ways. Individuals taking project leadership roles were identified by reviewing past issues of the local newspaper for articles on local activities and conducting "generalist interviews" with those having a comprehensive knowledge of community affairs. In order to include diverse representation, one proponent leader and one opponent leader were identified to capture the differing viewpoints surrounding issues with two distinct sides (we did not encounter issues with more than two sides although some issues were one-sided—for those, only one "point" person began the snowball process). In response to our request that these people name other people who were actively involved and would be "recognized by others who have been involved in the issue," more names were generated. Any resident mentioned by the point person automatically qualified for the "call" list based on the assumption that the point people had special and personal knowledge of those involved.

Subsequent interviews with residents named by the point people generated even more names. For those residents not named directly by point people to make the call list, at least two nominations (second-level nominations) were necessary. The reason for more conservative eligibility requirements for residents further from the point person was to ensure that those with a more secondary involvement (relative to the point person) were recognized by more than one individual. The second nomination served as a kind of insurance in accordance with Freeman's methods (1968) in distinguishing between first- and second-level nominations.

Also worth noting is that in order for a resident to receive an eligible "others-acknowledged" nomination, the person nominating them first had to be eligible. For example, Point Person A nominates Person B and Person C for the bike trail project. Person B and Person C are both interviewed because they only need to have one first-level nomination. In turn, Person B mentions Person D and E as residents actively involved in the project. Person C, on the other hand, mentions Person D and Person F. Person D is qualified to be interviewed as she received two second-level nominations, both from "eligibles." Neither Person E nor F are qualified for the call list as each only has one nomination. Say, however, that E is interviewed because she qualified for a different project like town beautification. Say also that she chooses the bike trail as one of three projects she was actively involved in (residents were limited to three) even though she was not "eligible." During the battery of questions she answers about the bike trail project, she mentions Person F as someone who is actively involved. Although Person F has one eligible nomination from Person C already, the second nomination by Person E does not qualify F to be interviewed simply because E herself is not qualified for the bike trail project. In this way, there are eligible others-acknowledged and ineligible others-acknowledged nominations. Only eligible others-acknowledged nominations count ensuring that only nominations from people who are themselves a part of the networks are used.

Data Sources

Primary data sources used in the culmination of this thesis were provided by 76 interview transcripts from the face-to-face interviews with resident leaders of Meadville. Secondary data sources include newspaper accounts of bike trail events as they occurred at city council and board of supervisor meetings, along with other published pieces, including editorials, letters to the editor, and advertisements.

Face-to-Face Interviews

The interview instrument asked resident leaders meeting eligible nomination criteria to answer both open- and close-ended questions. The questionnaire queried respondents on

their general perceptions about the community, more specific information about the initiation and development of issues with which they were involved, the social impact of the issues on the community, the nature and reasons for their involvement, and the participation of others. Most participants were contacted via telephone to set up a time for the face-to-face interview either at their place of work, home, the local extension office, or a local public meeting place. If they agreed to the interview, we asked them for permission to record it on audio tape to be transcribed at a later date. Before beginning, they were assured of the confidentiality of their identity in presentations of the findings.

Out of a total of 121 others-acknowledged nominations,

- 2 said they were not active in any of the seven projects and
- 6 were not local leaving a total of 113.

Of the 113,

- 11 (9%) were refusals and
- 26 (23%) were not contacted for various reasons (unable to schedule, did not call, unidentifiable, sick, family emergency, etc.).

A total of 76 individuals were interviewed in Meadville for their active involvement in at least one of the seven different projects/issues/events studied for an overall community response rate of 67%.

Bike Trail Face-to-Face Interviews

Regarding the bike trail project, out of 35 eligible others-acknowledged nominations,

- 2 were point people (one point person was used to generate the proponent network and the other generated the opponent network); 30 were first-level nominations; and 3 were second-level nominations.

- Of the 35,
  - 1 (3%) was not contacted due to bookkeeping error,
  - 2 (6%) did not live locally,
  - 2 (6%) did not self-acknowledge their active participation in any of the seven projects, and
  - 6 (17%), while receiving appropriate nominations from others, did not self-acknowledge their active participation in the bike trail project.

- Of the remaining 24,
  - 1 (4%) self-acknowledged his active participation but did not include it among the top 3, and
  - 5 (21%) who were contacted refused to participate.

Thus, 18 useable interviews resulted from the 24 who (potentially) met the stringent eligibility criteria for a project response rate of 75%. Note that in addition to the 35 who were nominated by others, 6 residents self-acknowledged their involvement but did not meet the others-acknowledged eligibility criterion.

The 6 who *were* acknowledged by others as having been involved in the bike trail project but did not themselves acknowledge active involvement were eliminated from the denominator when calculating the response rate. They did not acknowledge their involvements such that during the interview, participants were asked to identify from a list of the seven projects, which issues or events they were actively involved in at any time over the past three years. "By 'actively involved', we are referring to situations where you would be recognized by other community members as someone who either supported or opposed the project by your actions or deeds." These 6 people were recognized by others as being actively involved but did not say themselves (self-acknowledge) they were.

In addition, one who was both others-acknowledged and self-acknowledged dropped the bike trail when we asked him to pare down to three the list of projects he was most active in. The result was a total of 18 interviews which met the self- and others-acknowledged requirements as "valid" interviews after non-locals, non-participants, and those not both others- and self-acknowledged were removed. (Interview data from the 6 residents who said they were active in the bike trail project, but were not others-acknowledged, were excluded from the analysis with one exception to be noted later). Note that the 5 bike trail refusals constituted 45% of all community refusals and that these 5 were identified as project opponents by the opponent point person, leading to under-representation of that category. Thus, out of 18 valid bike trail interviews, 12 were proponents and 6 opponents.

General Demographic Survey

At the end of the face-to-face interview, respondents were asked to fill out a written demographic supplement either on the spot or later (see Appendix C for a copy). Many residents chose to take the supplemental survey (referred to as the "demographic survey") with them and either dropped it off at the extension office in a sealed envelope provided for them or mailed it back to ISU in the same self-addressed, stamped envelope. While basic background and demographic questions comprised two pages of the supplemental survey, five pages asked residents to rate specific quality of life elements in the community and to list their volunteer organizational affiliations. Of the 76 demographic surveys distributed in Meadville, 74 were returned completed for a response rate of 96%.

Bike Trail Demographic Survey

Of the 18 valid bike trail project leaders who were asked to complete a demographic survey after the completion of the face-to-face interview, two did not return the survey completed. One identified himself as a trail proponent while the other identified himself as a trail opponent. Therefore, demographic data was acquired from only 16 of the 18 bike trail participants for a response rate from bike trail participants of 89%.

Rural Development Initiative Study Data

Results from the 1994 study of social capital in Meadville are also used in this thesis as baseline information. The response rate to the RDI survey in Meadville conducted in 1994 was 69%.

The Use of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data are used in two phases of this thesis. In the section on community characteristics, all 76 interviewees were considered qualified to contribute data due to the general community nature of the analysis. However, when analysis narrows in on the bike trail, only interviews from the 18 who were "valid" (both others- and self-acknowledged) according to the snowball sampling methods were used. One caveat is the interview with the

editor of the local newspaper who did not meet the others-acknowledged nomination requirements for the bike trail. During the interview he gave for which he was "eligible" based on his participation in a different project, he self-acknowledged his active involvement in the trail issue. A decision was made to include his interview in the analysis on the bike trail because of his long-term and continuous involvement in reporting the issue as the newspaper editor. His attendance at all city council meetings as well as his subsequent note-taking and reporting of the minutes gave him specialized and comprehensive knowledge of issue specifics. Furthermore, he always reported in a cover story fashion the highlights of the council meetings on the front page of the weekly newspaper.

Another reason to favor the inclusion of the editor's perspective on the bike trail occurred in the form of local confidence in all-inclusive reporting of local events in the newspaper. First, residents were asked if the newspaper reported issues in which they were actively involved. If so, they were then asked which of three choices best described the role of the local newspaper in reporting the issue over time. Regarding all seven issues, 80% of responses indicated the paper "reported all sides (pros and cons) of the issue;" 16% of responses said "there was only one side to the issue," and only 4% of responses to this question indicated the paper "reported only one side of the issue." These results show a local confidence in the editor's reporting of community events. Inclusion of the editor's interview is therefore justified in relation to his role in and contributions to the trail project.

For the description in Chapter V (Community Characteristics: The Social Context), qualitative data were systematically assembled and screened after a thorough reading of all 76 transcripts. General themes recurred throughout the data, and a process of cutting and pasting resulted in common categories that residents used to characterize their community. The writing combines related and various points under broad themes and links them to general theoretical points. Nuances in the data are also explored that are perhaps not always addressed in the literature. In this way, the data are used inductively.

On the same token, not everyone always had the same perspective. Moreover, sometimes quantitative data did not support claims residents were making during their answers to open-ended questions. In this way, data triangulation was a method used to test

and discard propositions that emerged at one juncture in the data, but not in others. The constant formulation and reformulation of general propositions was therefore subject to test within the same dataset and contrary to basic expectations, revealing the approach used to integrate deductive and inductive logic.

IV. GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND SOCIETY

The social landscape of Meadville has been shaped in part by its geography. Located in the rolling hills of southwest Iowa, the town is spatially removed from major metropolitan neighbors and arterial routes. The city of Meadville did not grow as a response to a particular geographic advantage like some places do. While farming was influential in its development, the site was established arbitrarily by government decree. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, land west of the Mississippi River was the subject of a treaty signed by the U.S. government and indigenous Indian tribes. As the Sac, Fox, and Pottawattamie Indians relinquished their native lands, a new epoch of white settlement and farming took over. However, despite this change, early historical sources note that Meadville grew slowly because of its distance from the main route of expansion westward.

Eventually the town of Meadville was incorporated, an act that was contested by landowners owning agricultural land in the affected area who feared that future municipal taxes might be levied on their land when their property was absorbed. Unlike the bike trail, the incorporation passed—but not without some dispute. The newspaper successfully argued in favor of incorporation noting that the state supreme court allowed tax exemptions of agricultural land for such purposes. This was enough to convince the objecting landowners to concede and abandon their fears that they would bear the brunt of incorporation costs had there been no state tax exemptions.

A stage coach service arrived in Meadville by 1869 and although new railroad lines tempted Meadville with their promise, they served other towns, never coming within reach of the community. Nevertheless, agricultural interest in the area was heightened by healthy crops of bluegrass, an introduced species that provided fodder for cattle, sheep, and horses. As agricultural production in the form of livestock and grain experienced increased yields in the area, a concomitant need for shipping those goods to market arose. A railroad was therefore needed. Locals voted to increase their property taxes for the service and the city voluntarily offered the railroad a right-of-way to sweeten the deal, effectively coaxing a line

into the community by 1880. Agriculturally related service industries such as creameries then cropped up along with merchants dealing in agricultural goods.

Like much of Iowa, the local economy continues to be steeped in agricultural tradition, but emphasizes livestock production more than most parts of the state. The predominance of a hilly terrain and less fertile soils make the area more suitable for grazing than cultivation of row crops. Poultry raising and eggs emerged early on as important enterprises for the area, ventures that diversified into other related industries such as farm implement manufacturing and the more recent introduction of hog confinement operations. According to 1994 RDI data, only 5% of the population in Meadville engage in farming or farm labor activities as a principal source of income, whereas an average of 12% do so in the rest of the state (these figures are based on an average of the aggregated results from the 99 communities). However, 50% of the households surveyed in Meadville rely on either farming or farm labor to provide a secondary source of income, in contrast to an average of 23% of households across the state. These figures and comparisons show a relative decline in the Meadville area of farming as a primary source of household income, but a prominence of this sector as a source of secondary income. As residents of Meadville are well aware, agriculture in their part of the state is changing considerably but continues to play an important role in the local economy.

Local Business and Isolation

Meadville has never been subject to periods of drastic change throughout its history as immigrants have largely bypassed the community for more lucrative lands. The newcomers who chose to settle in Meadville constituted nothing more than a mere trickle. In the past, access was the primary limitation to the town's growth. Not until the railroad arrived in the late 19th century to transport Meadville's slowly growing stockpile of agricultural goods to market did the town have any kind of regular and dependable outside contact. Now, with the development of modern roads and the automobile, some people passing through catch a glimpse of the edge of town but few have reason to stop.

Due to the challenges of an undeveloped transportation network and a grounded agricultural lifestyle, residents fraternized locally and relied on each other for meeting their basic needs. Indeed, most of the population lives and works within the community today. According to the RDI study, 83 and 84% of the female and male labor force, respectively, rely on Meadville for employment, as compared to roughly 50% for each sex for Sigma City, Iowa's typical community (Lasley, Besser, Flora, and Ryan, 1995). The implication of such a high level of local employment means that most residents carry out their daily routine within Meadville and depend on others to do the same.

Regarding commerce, the town is economically interdependent. Eighty-four percent of the residents shop locally for daily needs (Lasley et al., 1995). Ninety-four percent of residents rely on local health care and 100% for church services. The total population within a 20 mile radius is a mere 13,317 according to 1990 Census statistics (Geolytics, Inc. CD-ROM). Although this fact does not provide a direct link to the spending habits of residents living in the Meadville area, one can assume that with the limited population base in its surroundings, daily needs and services are provided and consumed primarily by locals, making local patronage the lifeblood of small businesses.

An Older, Established Population

To provide a bit of background on the nature of the social structure in the community, it is helpful to review some of the dominant demographic characteristics. The ancestry of the community is predominantly German despite the community's annual celebration of its Scottish heritage. Ironically, not even 2% of the population report they are of Scottish descent according to 1990 Census figures. In contrast, 27% of the population claim German lineage with 20% claiming British heritage (including English, Scottish, and Welsh). About 18% who live in Meadville are of Irish descent.

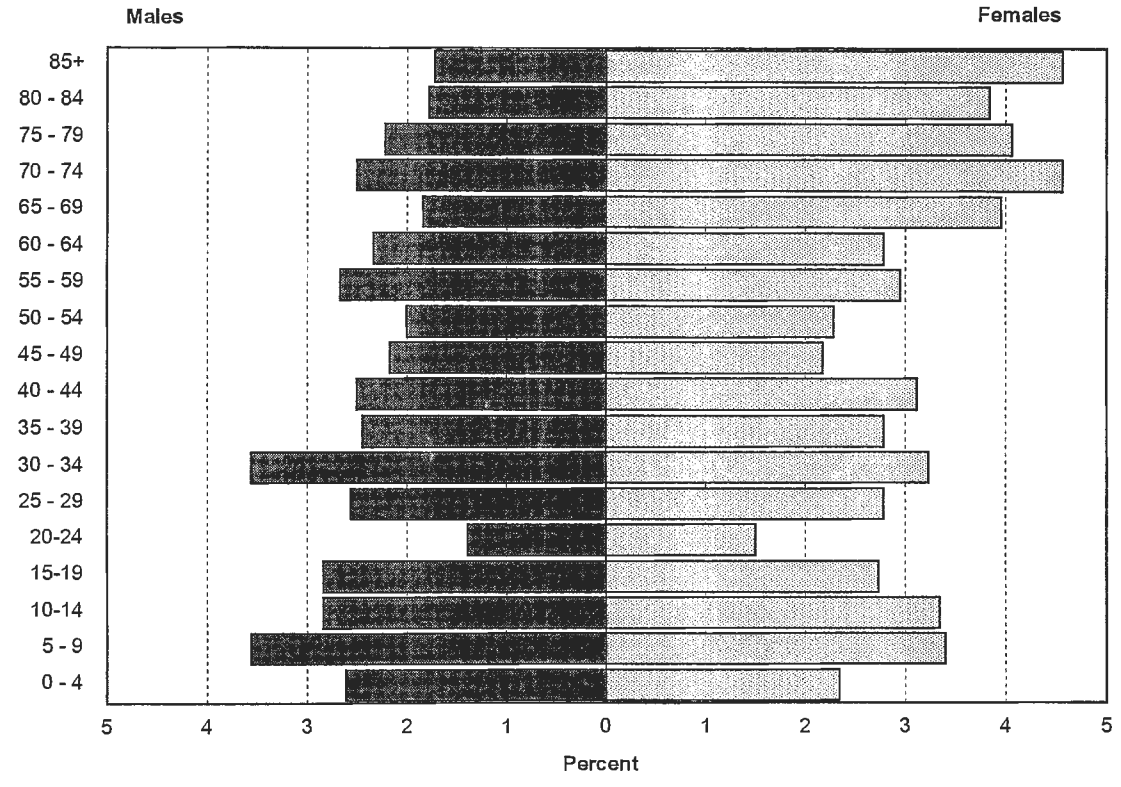
Ancestral heritage is considered a defining component in a community's social context. According to Salamon, rural cornbelt towns in Illinois in which the greatest portion of the population is comprised of German descendants typically "work toward sustaining communities because they believe that what benefits the community benefits them",

(1989:24). These German "Yeoman" towns tend to consider farming a family lifestyle rather than the business it is viewed to be in Yankee towns, or towns dominated by residents of British lineage. Furthermore, Yankee towns follow a more individualized, independent ethic by paying less attention to community welfare than Yeoman towns (Salamon, 1989). But what happens when a town such as Meadville mixes both German and British ancestry and their cultural characteristics? Sometimes, a blend of values is formed that emphasizes the individual at times, and the community at others.

In terms of age, the community is elderly with over 30% of the population age 65 or older (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). This is twice the proportion of elderly in Iowa, which ranks the state third in the entire nation (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995); Iowa's proportion of elderly is expected to increase in the future. Meadville's somewhat top-heavy population pyramid (see Figure 1) may have implications on the way the community deals with political matters, particularly those involving change as it relates to community development.

According to the RDI data (Lasley et al., 1995), over one-third of Meadville respondents have lived in the Meadville area for 40 years or more; over half have lived there 30 years or more. Over 40% of the adult population in Meadville is retired. In fact, more females are retired than are in the labor force (27% are employed full-time and 14% part-time). Fifty-four percent of Meadville's males are employed full-time, whereas 41% are retired (Lasley et al., 1995).

A sizeable proportion of the population is therefore disengaged to some extent from at least one part of community life—that of earning a living through work. For some, this might mean other kinds of economic withdrawal from the community. Typically, the political behavior of the aging in-place elderly (ages 65 and over) as opposed to those who migrate (to such places like Arizona or the Florida coast) follows certain spending patterns (Galston and Baehler, 1995). The elderly are known for an unwillingness to vote for local tax hikes which take a sizeable chunk out of their fixed incomes. Certain public services



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Housing and Population

Figure 1. Population Pyramid for Meadville, 1990, by Percent

are also known to suffer in communities with high elderly populations, most notably, those regarding education and childcare, two services that no longer directly concern that age bracket.

On the other hand, a large share of retirees in the community can bring a boon to the local volunteer corps. The lack of work commitments may mean a new devotion to community service that younger, working adults possibly with families can ill afford. Thus, formal organizational affiliations can be high in the community while support for projects that might deplete senior citizens' bank accounts is low. In fact, 79% of Meadville adults reported they belonged to some kind of group or organization according to 1994 RDI measures. However, when analysis of belonging to groups in Meadville was conducted, no significant difference ($p < .05$) was observed in group membership based on age. Also, there

is no difference (Chi-Square p-value = .997) between the likelihood of those under 65 and those 65 and older to have participated in community improvement projects in the past year.

The simple demographic fact of having an elderly population proportion that is twice that of the state and more than double the nation's cannot be ignored in relation to its potential influence on Meadville's social, political, and economic climate. Like schools, the bike trail issue as an outdoor recreational activity appeals to younger, more mobile generations. Yet unlike schools, Meadville has no history of community pride in its recreational opportunities. Therefore, that realm of development is not offered the same protection either institutionally or informally, especially when historically, the work demands of farming precluded the pursuit of frivolous outdoor recreation. Since many, if not most, in-place elderly are property owners and taxpayers and may find themselves paying a disproportionate share of local taxes (Galston and Baehler, 1995), the benefits of local recreational opportunities may elude them, especially in relation to the financial costs. If this same population also regards recreation more as a luxury, communities may find it difficult to rally senior citizens to support outdoor recreation proposals.

V. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Before narrowing in on the bike trail issue and how that project evolved, it is first necessary to broadly characterize the community of Meadville. Such characteristics will be described in terms of social capital to discover what the social structure means to residents, how they perceive community norms, and how they integrate such norms into their daily lives. What is the social context of Meadville? What difference does it make? According to Kulig and Waldner (1999), analyzing community development initiatives is crucial in identifying important components to help explain "the variability of [project] success due to individual community contexts" (44-45).

Coleman, in classifying types of communities and how different types affect the way a community deals with controversy, also focuses on context. The type of towns he calls "self-contained" where residents both live and work within the community are prone to intense responses to economic controversies that affect people's livelihoods (1957). Population shifts that bring newcomers to the community may also have an impact on the homo- or heterogeneity of local values with the latter tending to provoke controversy. Another difference among communities that allows some to progress unscathed by controversy yet others to suffer is "the past history of controversy in the community, which may have created mutual antagonisms or fostered unity" (Coleman, 1957:7). The following analysis addresses implicitly the influence of a "self-contained" or isolated economy and its resulting impact on the social life of Meadville as expressed through local norms encouraging the homogeneity of local values and a parallel aversion to heterogeneity. The influence of past history in dealing with controversy is discussed in the section on Historical Precedence in Chapter VI.

At the community level the social context may be understood in terms of the atmosphere of norms in which everyday life is conducted. These norms are bound to notions of trust that inhere in community relationships. Particularly in rural communities, frequent interaction is customary as a result of a small population meeting its daily needs within a particular geographic area. The nature of interaction in everyday life is dependent upon the

structure of relationships and the normative way in which daily events unfold. How residents make use of social ties and normative structures to accomplish collective goals can be considered community social capital. Conceptually, it can be thought of as the whole realm of expectations and behaviors that influences the experiences of individuals and the collective when attempting to make a decision on behalf of the community.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence exists to characterize Meadville as a high social capital community based on dimensions of trust, networks of acquaintanceship, and norms of reciprocity. Quantitative evidence for the high level of social capital (Table 1) was collected during the 1994 RDI study. Measures of social capital were derived from factor scales based on individual-level responses to nine questions, three for each of social capital's three dimensions. Means were then computed for all three factors and aggregated to the

Table 1. Quantitative Social Capital Dimensions and Measures, 1994 Survey

Trust Items[1]
Trusting/Not Trusting
Friendly/Unfriendly
Supportive/Indifferent
Acquaintanceship Networks
If I feel like just talking, I usually can find someone in Meadville to talk to.[2]
About what proportion of the adults living in Meadville would you say you know by name?[3]
About what proportion of your close personal adult friends live in Meadville?[4]
Norms of Reciprocity[5]
Indifference about the community
Failure of people to work together
Loss of community spirit

[1]Respondents were asked to circle one number on a scale from 1 to 7 that best describes the community for each of the three items.

[2]Respondents were asked to rate their community on a five-point scale by indicating whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement.

[3]Respondents could select from the following choices: "none or very few of them," "less than half of them," "about half of them," "most of them," or "all of them."

[4]Respondents could select from the following choices: "I really have no close personal friends," "none of them live here," "less than one-half of them live here," "about one-half of them live here," "most of them live here," or "all of them live here."

[5]Respondents were asked to indicate whether each of these three items "doesn't threaten," "somewhat threatens," or "severely threatens" the future of their community.

community level. The means were averaged for a total social capital score for each community. Meadville fell in the top quartile for these measures.

Qualitative evidence collected during the 1999 snowball sample of 76 community leaders provides further support that Meadville has a high level of social capital. Questions about the general nature of the community elicited responses relating to high levels of trust, dense acquaintanceship networks, and established norms of reciprocity, confirming the previously used quantitative measures. In this section, qualitative evidence will offer a more in-depth analysis of the nature of the social capital, particularly the specific norms and expectations local residents have and hold about their community. Qualitative evidence is also used to emphasize some of the consequences or drawbacks of being closely knit where the social structure presents certain conditions and challenges to which residents must respond and cope in controversial cases. In such instances, residents will attempt to achieve both individual and collective goals while attempting to function within that framework. This involves trying to meet all of the goals they set without sacrificing the amicable nature of existing relationships

Most of the data included in the following analysis were gleaned from the 76 interviews conducted in Meadville. Open-ended responses to the following three questions posed at the beginning of each interview were designed to elicit general responses about the community at large: What is it like to live in Meadville? What do you like best about living in Meadville? What do you like least about living in Meadville? Answers to these questions reveal emerging patterns of attributes that comprise the social structure of Meadville. They include concern and cooperation, expectations of citizen participation, an intimate social environment, a pressured local government, an underlying system of individualistic values, personalization of politics and conflict avoidance, resistance to change, pressure to conform, and an apprehension of oppositional politics. Some of the patterns that emerged are key components identified by Flora and Flora as community-level drains on entrepreneurial social infrastructure (1993). Each of these characteristics will be examined in detail in the following sections.

Collective Action and Norms of Reciprocity in a Caring Community

On a positive note, residents often cite one of the benefits of living in Meadville is that people care about the community, a condition that one respondent associated with the town's ability to endure.

> [People] have true concern for the good-being of Meadville. It's nice to have people like that because you see little towns that don't and they no longer have anything but a pop machine that says 'out of order' when you drive through at midnight when you're thirsty. It's good to have these kind of people.

Residents also note that people in Meadville are willing to go the extra mile to help out fellow residents: "If I need something and the place is closed, you can call them up and ask and they'll open up for you. They're so accommodating."

Another resident claimed that shared concern for the community can lead to cooperation for common goals: "The camaraderie is what has instilled me to live here. It's people working together, working for the same goals." Yet another resident recognized that sharing common goals can lead to cooperation despite differences in opinion on ways to go about achieving those goals. Moreover, he noted that differences can even contribute to, rather than detract from, a project's success.

> You can change a community if you get everybody on the same pages and I know everybody has different needs and opinions when you get focused in on something...but it takes a lot different entities and lots of different people to contribute their own part. But once everything gets going, it's amazing what you're going to accomplish in a short period of time.

The amazement this resident expressed at the ability of a group of people to work through their differences for the good of the community was not always a sentiment applied to getting projects implemented. In a community where people cooperate to accomplish a task an individual cannot accomplish alone, cooperation is also mentioned as a technique used in methods of collective resistance:

> Whenever I've seen that something was stopped, it's always been a group stopping it. Not one person will take responsibility of being the bad guy, but a group will...It's never been an individual—it's been groups, a coalition-type deal.

Thus, it appears that one individual alone cannot or will not stop a project whereas several are capable of doing so.

A common interest in the welfare of the community unites residents of Meadville, which directly affects local activity. The town is considered a lively, thriving haven of concern and cooperation. But because norms of cooperation are the standard in Meadville does not necessarily mean those norms will be used to implement public good projects. As the resident above reflected, individuals in Meadville will also use those norms to muster opposition to stop community projects.

Norms of Participation

Involvement in civic activities is a widely held expectation for Meadville residents. Indeed, long-time residents recommend to new residents they become involved in the community through formal group membership.

> It was suggested to me by the board of directors that it wasn't a mandatory thing, but to pick out one thing in town that you want to be involved with...and get to know people.

However, strong normative expectations for civic engagement can sometimes lead to burnout in small communities, especially when a small number of the total population shoulders most of the civic responsibilities.

> There are 100 people in Meadville that do things and that's about it. And probably 25 who do a lot. And it doesn't ever change and they get burned out.

Even those who experience burnout and subsequently withdraw from volunteer community life are not ready to be forgotten.

> I got so busy [with the community] that my wife and I never saw each other because she was busy too. And we said we've got to stop this crap, and we did. And we probably went too far the other way, and that bothers me some. Many of the young people, young ones who just moved to town, they think, "Well he don't take part in anything." I've already done it before they got here, and I'm not interested in doing it again!

This resident, who already "put in his time," was afraid to be labeled by young newcomers as a non-contributor to community affairs. Recognition of community service is clearly an

important aspect of this resident's involvement, one who admits feelings of guilt for "going too far the other way." Yet despite some of the negative sanctions that may govern Meadville's norms of community participation, for some, these norms offer an opportunity to strengthen ties with other community members who are also involved in projects.

The Morality of Informality—An Intimate Social Environment

One of the many pleasures of small-town life that residents allude to include knowing everybody in town.

> [I like] being able to know people, a large percentage of the people, trustworthiness, and a lot of times just the fact that you know who you're dealing with. And then the fact that once you do know that, you are pleased with what you do know.

Frequent and intense interaction can strengthen ties among residents, which in turn leads to greater trust. Trusting other members of the community means a sense of security and safety where people watch out for each other. Repeatedly, residents proclaimed their satisfaction with Meadville's safe social environment, an environment that provides them with a worry-free sense of security for their children as they play unattended in city streets. In addition, residents trust that their property will go untouched.

> I love living in a small community and I like the fact that I don't lock my house, that I don't lock my car, and I see children out riding bicycles unattended by adults because we kind of all look after everybody.

An ideology of neighborliness means that arrangements between friends and neighbors have a reciprocal quality which creates an informal system of insurance that becomes a part of the community structure (Vidich and Bensman, 1968). The informal system of insurance also extends to matters handled by local government. Informality is key to local expectations of trust. A whole system of values depends on the expectation that one will trust and be trusted by other community members; neither assurances nor compensation for items lent or time spent to help out are offered or needed. This keeps norms of reciprocity continuing for a long period of time, creating an informal cycle of aid that serves a dual purpose: It provides security but also requires continued interaction and a future relationship. A whole system of trust hinges on the presence of informality in local

relationships and becomes part of the moral norms of the community—neighbors should trust each other.

In Meadville, residents share common values concerning the care of their community and the care of their children, uniting them in a tight weave of close-knit comfort. However, the notion of morality in informality is more than neighborliness. It also pertains to the way in which residents feel issues ought to be handled in the community. Close ties can mean a more grassroots approach to governance, bridging the gap between the system and the individual. In Meadville, residents perceive greater civic involvement in decision-making.

> In bigger communities that I have lived in, you don't know the powers that be, and here you know them and you talk to them on the street, and you have a lot of input into the decisions that are made.

For this resident, small communities offer better and more opportunities to interact with community leaders, giving the ordinary person a chance to influence local life. There is no "us" and "them." In this way, residents feel a part of the decision-making process, even if their views never come to bear on the final decisions made. Residents are made to feel that control rests among the people, not to detached and removed "powers that be" who make decisions lightly without regard to their constituencies. A whole system of trust and morality reside in the structure of government and how that authority responds to the community. Although this can certainly lead to more responsive government, frequent exposure among 'the common folk' can also lead to impotent governance. Close ties can be equated not only with a sense of community, but also a source of social pressure (Boissevain, 1974).

Valuing Individual Freedom

Strong norms of civic engagement are closely tied to the structure of the community and are often used to get things done (or stopped). However, despite the apparent norms of civic involvement, the American value for individuality has not released its stronghold on Meadville. Herein lies the contradiction facing community members who cannot disengage themselves from individualistic values while struggling to put forth the good of the community.

Despite an apparent norm for civic engagement and participation, deep-seated values of individual liberty and freedom appeared frequently during the interviews with Meadville project participants, whether it was through self-admission of what residents liked least about the community, or a commentary on what they liked best. "I like privacy, and I think I can probably get that easier in a small town." One resident even put the expectation and appreciation for individualism in the community in terms of property and yard care. "You know, if you don't want to mow your grass, nobody is going to say anything to you."

The larger cultural context and value system surrounding American ideals of individualism, liberty, and privacy play an important role in the social context of Meadville. The drive for self-fulfillment is an insatiable desire for personal freedom (Miller, 1986). This was amply demonstrated by one Meadville resident's view that "Everybody kind of leaves you alone and you live your own life." People are liberated when they are independent, free from the ties that require them to rely on resources controlled by others. As a community with strong land-based and agricultural roots like most communities in Iowa and the Midwest, notions of individualism are integrated into a way of life and are crucial to, if not the cornerstone of, a complex system of values of which property rights are key. As Nash (1967) explains, these values are remnants of a white, European settlement history. These settlers fled their homeland to be free from an oppressive system of land tenure and social control. Property ownership became a way to achieve their quest for liberty and became the ultimate symbol of democracy. Not surprisingly, the tenacity to which Americans cling to notions of liberty and property are not easily unraveled.

Slater (1970) regards the supremacy of individualism in American culture as a kind of sickness, insidious in its paralysis of human society, the result of which is a fragmented amalgam of independent, deluded people.

> When a value is as strongly held as is individualism in America the illnesses it produces tend to be treated by increasing the dosage...What accidental contacts we do have...seem more intrusive, not only because they are unsought but because they are unconnected with any familiar pattern of interdependence. (Slater, 1970:7)

For residents of Meadville, the contradiction may seem especially frustrating and cumbersome. An underlying system of individual rights and freedoms have a centrifugal

(individually oriented) effect on residents' behavior while at the same time, strong norms of participation draw them into the community centripetally (towards the collective). A balance is therefore difficult to strike. One resident implicitly recognized this conflict, commenting on the relationship between individualism and community.

> I do think there needs to be more participation with various groups...whether it be the Lodge, the Lion's Club... I think more people have the attitude of staying home and doing their own thing and not becoming involved in the community...But the more you start losing some of those types of [cooperative activities], again, the less you become a community and the more you become a group of individuals. [Then] there isn't that sense of community—it all ties together.

The revelation articulated here is an understanding of the emergent properties of groups, the very core and foundation of sociology in presenting the traditional claim that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Without the connections (social capital) among individuals, community cannot remain healthy.

Ultimately, the question becomes: How effective is the pull of local participation norms within a pervasive system of individual rights? The answer may lie in the process through which Meadville resolves community problems. Only through disagreement and dissensus, specifically instances where individual rights do not coincide with the public good, does one begin to determine how the costs and benefits of individualism versus collectivism tip the scales in a community with high social capital. Latent social and cultural values emerge and are prioritized when communities undergo conditions of conflict, especially when individual costs of some certain collective actions are to be unequally borne by any part of the population. Oftentimes, these periods of controversy will precipitate some form of community action but the process through which the community handles stress may not serve the needs of the collective. "The ideal of freedom provides [Americans] few resources for talking about their collective future" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, 1985:25). The following sections illustrate why this is so in terms of social capital.

Community Size, Personalization of Politics, and Conflict Avoidance

The size of Meadville is instrumental in the culmination, exchange, and reinforcement of local social norms. Residents frequently mention size as a source of

satisfaction they enjoy from living in the community, crediting the small population for their sense of serenity.

> I like a lot of the people [here] and meeting people can be a positive influence. You get too big of a town and you lose track of people, relationships, and things like that.

> I like the small town atmosphere, the quietness, and because we know our neighbors and know a lot of people in the community, it [gives us] a sense of a close-knit feeling.

However, size is also implicated in the need, even requirement, to get along.

> In a small community, if you don't get along, you have a problem.

> We're a small community; we've gotta work together, so let's get over [it].

> There aren't any permanent divisions. That's one of the things in Meadville that you've got to realize. We're too small to have permanent divisions. We've got to work together!

As indicated by the comments above, disagreement is not completely absent in Meadville. However, the language above captures a sense that residents feel uncomfortable with it. Knowing there is a high probability of future association with those with whom residents disagree serves as an effective incentive to not only cooperate (Powell, 1996), but to do so by avoiding conflict and potential unpleasantries. Instead of addressing problems head on, they are swept under the communal rug and hidden away.

Techniques used by residents to deal with their feelings about controversial issues employ a combination of public conflict avoidance eased by private complaining. People who take issue with certain aspects of community life choose to do so behind closed doors or among the safety of others with similar sentiments.

> What I am saying, is, the people...who are complaining, why don't they come to [the formal meetings], rather than talking around the issue and complaining in people's homes and at card parties?

Private complaining stems from a conscious effort to avoid controversial subjects. Citizens are reluctant to become engaged in controversy for fear of disturbing community harmony, a finding that parallels the experience of Salamon and Davis-Brown's Smallville (1991). Residents reflected this fear when referring to controversial issues.

> This issue needs to go away. And the less said about it, the less discussed about it, the sooner it will go away. I'm not interested in dragging out a bunch of people who may have opposed this thing and stirring up feelings again. I really don't want to do that.
>
> This is all private stuff, right? Because, last year, from what I saw (and that's kind of why I stayed away from it a little bit more), there was a power struggle last year.
>
> You start looking at alternatives rather than [argue about it] because that's where you make enemies and then it just lasts forever.

Coleman explains community conflict avoidance in terms of historical experience by citing "Hilltown," a town with few provocative incidents in the community's early days, leaving it ill-equipped to deal with controversies encountered later on. Like Hilltown, Meadville appears inexperienced in dealing with controversy. One resident inadvertently revealed the community's response to a "problematic" controversy.

> You ended up with a lot of division in the community...[but with] a little bit of time and a couple of meetings, we probably would have gone ahead and worked it out informally and it wouldn't have even become a problem. Instead, it became a big issue for a period of time when it probably shouldn't have.

Another adherent to the historical explanation in regard to conflict avoidance is Slater (1970). In contrast to Coleman, however, he blames the problem not on a collective inability to deal with problems based on lack of experience, but on personal traits that have been passed down through the generations.

> The avoiding tendency lies at the very root of American character. This nation was settled and continuously repopulated by people who were not personally successful in confronting the social conditions...in their mother country, but fled these conditions...(Slater, 1970:13-14)

Quite a different approach is taken by Coser who explains conflict avoidance in terms of the density of networks in a community, "The closer the relationship, the greater the affective investment, the greater also the tendency to suppress rather than express hostile feelings" (1956:62). For Coser, close relationships are typified by frequent social interaction that involves total rather than fragments of personalities. Continuing in the same vein, he attributes conflict avoidance precisely to the nature of close relationships and the strong course of affective attachment among members where politics simply cannot be separated from people by either time or space. For Coser, personalization of politics leads to conflict

avoidance, whereas Coleman takes a more macro-oriented, historical view. Either way, both have valid arguments each applicable to Meadville.

Ample evidence exists to support Coser's analysis of the greater affective investment of relationships within the community and how politics are personalized within the social structure of Meadville:

> I pretty much have just stayed out...because I don't want to be seen publicly as opposed to or in favor of it. Because in my opinion, it's one of those things that I think you are more likely to have people misperceive what you're doing...It's all going to be seen as a personality issue of who you support among the parties involved, not the issue.
>
> You had people say they aren't going to support it because they didn't like so and so. So all of a sudden there were sides. Politics. When sides were split, it became personal because of personal reasons rather than for business reasons.

These remarks illustrate the fact that residents perceive themselves to be the targets of personal attacks for views they take on community issues. In Meadville, residents feel issues are not separated from individuals; these personalized politics foster a reluctance to get involved in issues generating controversy. As Meadville residents seem to know, residents respond to community issues based not on their attitudes toward the event or policy, but their attitudes toward people or groups stemming from pre-existing antagonisms (Coleman, 1957) or, on the same token, favoritism.

Coser takes conflict avoidance to another level by introducing the stability of relationships into the equation. Implied is the notion that simply because conflict behavior is absent does not mean that the hostile feelings do not exist. Rather, hostile feelings are less likely to be expressed as long as parties in a relationship fear for its dissolution as a result of voicing their antagonistic views. If the relationship is unstable, members will choose to repress their feelings (Coser, 1956). In fact, the absence of outright conflict can be construed as an index of "underlying elements of strain" when members perceive the bonds between them to be too weak to withstand the expression of their differences (Coser, 1956:82).

In Meadville, this argument is relevant where some relationships may indeed be fragile since "memories in small communities are long and conflictual relationships often transcend single issues" (Martinez-Brawley, 1990:71). However, it is difficult to provide

evidence for long and conflictual relationships in Meadville because they fell beyond the extent of the event analysis the researchers conducted.

Returning to Simmel and Coser's argument that affective conditions in communities can and do lead to conflict avoidance brings up the topic of social costs. Residents of the community may choose not to participate in controversial topics simply because they perceive the costs to far exceed the benefits. Why should they put their reputation on the line for the sake of the community unless they stand to lose more from *not* participating? Such was the case for landowners involved in the bike trail issue who stood to lose control of land if they did not speak out. Moreover, if the structure is not in place to accommodate compromise or in any other way make smooth the road to resolution, clearly residents might choose not to get involved in light of the personalization of politics in the community.

In a place where close-knit relationships and trust typify a social structure with high levels of social capital, conflict avoidance can be a natural negative consequence, but does not have to be. Various outcomes of social capital can exist where one finds open communities with stable social relationships and less affective investment, and communities with very closed, fragile social relationships with more affective investment. Meadville is an example of the latter. Examples of the former include communities that have been confronted with disagreement and even unpleasant outbreaks of conflict, while managing to stay on speaking terms afterward. This puts them in a position to deal more effectively with future problems than communities avoiding controversy.

Avoidance does not mean solution but instead a festering persistence that when left unaddressed, can lead to a long history of repressed hostility and a continued web of fragile social relationships. Although Meadville is a town characterized by caring, trusting, cooperative relationships, high social capital does not necessarily mean an absence of hostility. A collective memory of community politics can mean a delicate social order where any kind of change can throw it off balance.

Resistance to Change

Rural areas have often been the targets of criticism for dealing poorly with change. Change is often viewed as a threat to the established power structure and status quo. Tradition seems to dominate these places where any disturbance can elicit objections and outcries from long-time residents. As Salamon notes about "Yeoman" communities of German descent in Illinois, residents in such communities usually use consensus to build agreement about what the community should be, which, in turn, "facilitates mobilization of its citizens, but also makes them more concerned with preserving things...Their innate conservatism makes it less likely that Yeoman communities will take risks or develop innovative ideas" (1989:24).

Meadville is no exception. Residents offered comments to support the common suspicion that rural areas resist change or at least a rapid form of it. Newcomers to the community feel the resistance quite strongly.

> It's a friendly small town, but if you're the new person...[when I was new] there weren't people beating my door down. I had to join some clubs and church. Then it evolved, but there weren't people beating my door down offering me apple pie...

> I have mixed feelings because I don't think we necessarily need to [pursue this controversial project], but at the same time, I look at that and say, 'Somebody new came in and tried to provide something new for the community and then they got stabbed in the back.'

One resident likened it to the demographic fact that the community is comprised largely of older residents. These older residents resent even their own from coming back to the community and bringing with them fresh, new ideas.

> I just think that sometimes we get stuck in the old ways of doing things and people are really afraid of change. And I think that some of that may be because of the older population. They're used to having things the same way its been for years, and now that the younger population is starting to return home, it is kind of hard for them to recognize change.

Another attributed resistance to change to the community's farming background.

> In order to make that happen I'm going to have to help work against the old farmer mentality of it you know, 'We've never had it before. We're doing okay.'

Surprisingly, residents do not go about their daily lives in Meadville unaware of this negative characteristic of their community. Some acknowledged the fact that the community has difficulty accepting change. Some distanced themselves from the stereotypical, parochial mentality, saying "they" when referring to members of the community who hold such views.

> Probably the worst thing about Meadville... is that you get the impression that it's a closed-in community. They don't want outsiders, as far as coming in and evaluating or whatever... they kind of like to deal with things on their own.

Not only do residents distance themselves from the "small town mentality," they link resistance to change to turf wars and territoriality. That territoriality unites residents of the community into cliques that protect the existing structure.

> I call it 'small town syndrome.' They want their way, so they guard against anyone challenging them. People are very cliquish about it—more small town mentality...

As water resource planners attempting to solicit local support for the Brandywine plan learned during a water conservation effort in rural Pennsylvania, "People don't like change. It can be argued that where stable, rigid living patterns have been fractured by change, new ideas are easier to introduce" (Strong, 1975:197). In contrast, in areas where rigid living patterns have not had the opportunity to grow through experience, new ideas are more difficult to introduce. On the failed attempt to get landowner cooperation in Chester County, Pennsylvania, a newspaper noted that the Brandywine water conservation plan threatened the local power structure where change was considered a threat, not an opportunity. Further analysis by a Brandywine project leader revealed an outcome heavily influenced by custom or patterns of the past (Strong, 1975). "Political acceptance was the keystone of a successful plan" and as proponents of the Brandywine plan were well aware, residents are only likely to accept "plans which call for little change" (1975:xii). Obviously, Meadville is not the only community to suffer from this kind of malaise but evidence seems to suggest it will continue in the future.

One Meadville resident felt it was a lack of understanding that tempts residents to dig in their heels when faced with new situations.

> [People in Meadville] can be a little bit provincial and at times not understanding of some of the changes and things going on around us.

Attempting to explain why others in the community resist change was not the only evidence provided for its occurrence in the community. As one person admitted, "I'm kind of one of those that if it worked in the past, let's be careful about making many big changes." But what if it did not work in the past? What if residents develop a skewed perception of what "worked" to keep community peace? Despite this particular resident's admission, most people were critical of the community's unyielding approach to new and different ideas. As one resident commented, being skeptical of new ideas is easier than accepting them, "It's just easier to keep doing the same thing you've always done."

Another resident described a general rural mindset as the major obstacle to change in the community, reinforcing the notion that rural residents are less likely to yield to change when compared to their urban counterparts.

> People are going to have different ideas and newer ideas, and it's not just the elderly people, but I think in a rural community, ideas are very patterned or very set. They're harder to break in a rural area than they are in maybe a more metropolitan area. People [here] are pretty set in their ways, and it's hard to accept change.

Regardless of any specific explanation why, residents of Meadville recognize that their community has difficulty accepting new ideas. As a result, a perception of instant collective rejection may condition residents to withhold suggestions and ideas that might be construed as too abrupt, revolutionary, or contrary to the status quo enjoyed so far. As one resident confirmed, "It's just an attitude that exists. There's an attitude like, 'No, it's not going to work. Why do it?' Well, then it's already defeated." If the general perception is that the community refuses to change regardless, little motivation exists to challenge the trend. Instead, residents submit to the pressures and adopt a defeatist attitude.

Community Pressure

Small communities are in a unique position to exert social control and enforce norms because of the frequency and intensity of interaction as well as the dense networks of kinship and friendship ties. Dense networks, combined with small populations, can provide the foundation for highly cohesive communities in which "conformity to understood rules is effectively controlled through gossip and peer pressure" (Salamon, 1989:23). Typically, the

smaller the community the stricter the rules that control behavior (Martinez-Brawley, 1990). Olson (1965) concurs with this notion, noting that social pressures, as well as social incentives, operate in groups of smaller size where members have face-to-face contact with one another.

What is identified as one of the community's primary advantages is also mentioned frequently as its disadvantage. When asked what they liked least about living in Meadville, many residents responded,

> Everyone knows everyone else's business!

> I guess the primary drawback that you have with a small town tends to be the gossip [where] an unreasonable number of people seem to spend an unreasonable amount of time worrying about other people's business.

Another resident put a more positive spin on his interpretation of small town 'meddling,' making a distinction between urban and rural perceptions: "If you grew up in a big city or aren't familiar with small town life, you might think it's snoopiness, but I prefer to believe it's concern."

How does a community exert pressure on individuals to act in certain ways? One way is through social incentives or sanctions where pressure is used to exact punishment if people do not act on behalf of the community will. Punishment may occur in the form of refusing to patronize a certain business owner, snubbing a neighbor on the street or in the grocery store, rallying sentiment against 'the norm perpetrator' among one's friends, or any other number of tactics. One resident expressed his reluctance to get involved with the bike trail because of such reasons.

> I don't want to get into the argument of whose property it's going to be on because of all the professional trouble.

The current mayor (at the time of the interviews) identified at least one local strategy when he spoke about local involvement of businesspeople on the council:

> If they are smart businessmen, they aren't going to be on the council because you have to make decisions that are going to make people mad.

The social cost residents must bear for behaving in ways contrary to expectations should not be ignored, especially in rural communities, where ecological factors such as population size are so crucial to patterns of interaction and norm enforcement.

Based on this premise, Meadville residents are certain to consider the social costs before moving forward with "public good" projects. As citizens of a high social capital community, residents carefully weigh the position of the collective on an issue before they choose to act one way or the other. Their behavior is dependent on the collective which defines their social status and social acceptance or rejection. And although Olson (1965) insists that status and acceptance are non-collective goods, the collective in the case of a high social capital community is often the element that defines those goods.

As will be shown in the case of the bike trail, the social cost of individuals supporting the trail against the objections of landowners was perceived to be high. Fearing social reprisals, one resident shrouded her support for the trail in secrecy by anonymously publishing an ad in the local paper in support of the trail. Others mentioned keeping one's views private in order to avoid paying for it in the family business where taking sides could mean fewer profits.

Support for the contention that social pressures influence behavior in Meadville occurred in many different forms, one of which concerned a new city council member who cast a vote on another controversial issue.

> I voted in favor of [the issue] as a city councilman. Honest and deep in my heart, I'm opposed to it, but I'd be recognized as in favor. I was new [to the council]. I went along with the crowd.

If local decision-makers feel pressure to conform when faced with these dilemmas, one can only reason that it is possible, if not likely, that many important community decisions are made as a result of perceived pressures. Such decisions impact not only individuals, but the broader community.

As one frustrated resident pointed out, perceptions may be shaped on the basis of a few loud objections that are heard more clearly than the views of a silent majority supporting a controversial issue. Those perceptions may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the

entire community, but rather a select few who take a more fervent approach to being heard. Yet despite their small numbers, those are the ones that will be the most remembered by town leaders when it comes to making decisions.

> Out of a community of 1500, you might have five people who are calling and complaining...You just have that handful of people who are out complaining, beating on doors and calling people... It doesn't necessarily mean there's a lot of people, but when I say strong opposition, it wasn't just a random phone call or someone made a snide comment. People were intentionally contacting various city council members and contacting the President of the Chamber of Commerce and things, trying to get things shut down.

The frustration indicated by this woman is that the voices of a few are misconstrued as representative of the entire community when, in fact, it is only a small, outspoken minority who employ powerful strategies to shut down a project.

Meadville's City Council: Responsive or Pressured?

Whose voices are heard above the din often depends on the common challenges facing local governments: "How to maintain both social order and personal autonomy in one and the same society" (Etzioni, 1996:1). Etzioni's (1996) reference to "authentic communities" that are responsive to the "true needs" of all community members can be extended to refer to a notion of responsive government. In Meadville's bike trail proposal, the appropriate body is the local city council. Recognizing that fulfilling the needs of all members is usually impossible, contradictions lead council members to juggle needs of the competing interests. When doing so, dangers lie in becoming both too centripetal or too centrifugal where favoring one exacts a cost at the expense of the other. "Centripetal forces pull toward higher levels of community service...; centrifugal forces pull toward higher levels of...individualization, self-expression, and subgroup liberty" (Etzioni, 1996:6).

Local government as the expression of the community must weigh collective goals and individual goals concurrently, and make decisions that will impact both—sometimes unequally. Government must attempt to strike a balance to minimize the supremacy that one extends over the other (Etzioni, 1996). In Meadville, the pressures of weighing the collective against the individual are all too apparent as indicated by residents commenting on their local

government. What some perceive as a "responsive local government," others see one that is non-responsive, timid, and cowed.

> The city council is very indecisive. Unable to make decisions, *unwilling* to make decisions. It's small town politics...

> I guess I get a little bit frustrated with our city council...We tend to drag our feet a lot of times [and] I get very frustrated with that. I'm sure that's a community problem everywhere.

Clearly, the dilemma is complex but not viewed as one that is unique to Meadville. Indeed it is not. But the intimacy of the social environment does indicate that some kind of political inertia is not unfamiliar to the government and residents of Meadville.

So effective are the oppositional strategies in Meadville that even once a decision is made with the consent of the formal governing body, it does not mean it will necessarily stand. The volatility of an issue can create much division and put the reputations of local leaders in precarious positions precisely because issues become so personalized, causing entire groups to withdraw resolutions that come under fire by certain factions in the community. As one leader commented in support of this argument,

> The thing that concerns me is that a group made a decision, and when they start getting flack from the town, they want to go back on their decision after plans have already been made. I just think that when a group makes a decision they should stick by it, rather than in mid-flight decide something different...

Failing to conform clearly has its costs for community leaders and residents involved in controversial projects in Meadville. "Closeness gives rise to frequent occasions for conflict," but whether or not they will be manifested in outright conflict depends on the extent to which residents will strive to suppress it (Coser, 1956:85). Projects with little controversy (where the public good parallels the private good) are different, however, where the social costs are low and the benefits high as this research revealed. The research also shows that non-controversial issues in Meadville such as an integrated daycare center and teen center were implemented quickly and effectively with few obstacles to impede their development.

Notwithstanding the propensity to avoid discord, most residents believe the community does not withhold information, despite one view that "the less people know, the less they can interfere," as one resident acidly remarked. One woman was more empathetic by attempting to understand it from the 'other' side. She explained resistance in terms of the detachment opponents might feel should they perceive they are somehow excluded from the decision-making process.

> Sometimes I think that people disagree because sometimes they don't feel involved and they feel like they don't really know what it's about. Once they get a handle on it and they are a part of it, then they become much more agreeable to what's going on.

All of the themes emerging from residents' comments reveal normative patterns that provide a context in which social life can be considered in relation to community development projects, especially ones involving controversy. It is important to recognize the influence of community characteristics such as high social capital since controversy must operate within the present social structure "within the system of mutually established laws, norms, and values" (Horowitz, 1962:184).

In Meadville, individuals meet their needs in the community by treading a thin line between the pursuit of individual and community goals through the maintenance of strong, affective ties. But norms that support close-knit, caring relationships with an emphasis on civic engagement can also generate negative consequences such as a pressured local government, personalization of politics, and conflict avoidance. In addition, it may create some contradictions when underlying value systems, in stark contrast to community-oriented values and expectations, are very individualistic. Members of the community must therefore try to juggle the contradiction. Only through understanding the social context and the way in which social relations are "continuously constructed and reconstructed during interaction" (Granovetter, 1985:486) does one begin to understand the processes at work in community development initiatives.

VI. EVENT CHARACTERISTICS: CONTROVERSY

The nature of a specific community project or event is important when considering its probable outcome. Event characteristics can either unite a community or divide it (Coleman, 1957). As for the latter, the degree of citizen involvement in small, self-sufficient communities is larger than in cities (Coleman, 1957), thus making controversy more pronounced or acute in small towns, a position confirmed by Salamon and Davis-Brown's research in "Smallville" (1991).

Coleman cites three criteria effective in causing controversy: the event must be important in citizens' lives, it must affect people differently, and it must require action. All three pertain to the Meadville's bike trail project. The criterion that it must affect people differently served as the most important one in generating local controversy. Many landowners who lived adjacent to the route claimed it would affect them more negatively than it would residents who did not live along the trail. As such, it was important to the community and required action to resolve.

Sorting through the Conflict

Despite the implicit goals of sociology to understand and examine situations of conflict (Mack, 1965), the literature is scattered when it comes to streamlining terms used to describe various shades of community disagreement. Coleman (1957, 1966) and Sanders (1961) come closest in their explications of different *stages* of community controversy. Otherwise, a variety of terms are used to denote the presence of social tension. These terms vary from dissensus to competition, controversy, and conflict. Therefore, a brief review to clarify their meanings is appropriate.

Mack distinguishes between competition and conflict, the former of which he defines as "a contention of two or more persons or groups for the same goal" (1965:391). In contrast, conflict is antagonistic struggle in which the aim is the "annihilation, defeat, or subjugation of the other person or group" (Mack, 1965:391). The difference then, lies in intent. Certainly, as Mack (1965) readily agrees, both are processes of opposition, yet the objective in competition is not annihilation of the opponent, but the striving for ends according to

established rules or norms that govern how competitors can treat each other. Hence, behavioral norms limit the lengths one can achieve to reach a set of goals in competition, but not in cases of conflict which can climax in an all-out brawl. According to Mack's distinctions, the bike trail issue would qualify as a competition, not a conflict, insofar as each group was vying for the same goal—gaining control over land for the proposed trail route—but within the context of established norms of behavior. At no time were community norms abandoned or smear campaigns invoked to deconstruct opponents. Yet as Horowitz (1962) contends, Simmel would disagree somewhat with Mack's definition, claiming that even conflict operates within mutually recognized norms. Granted, while Simmel (1955) does agree that conflict may invoke acts that annihilate one of the conflicting parties, he takes a more functionalist view by claiming that unity of divergent dualisms is the ultimate outcome. Conflict is a uniting event and competition is merely one form of conflict (Simmel,1955).

Aubert (1963) presents yet another typology of social tension between actors. His includes what he terms two types of conflict: competition and dissensus. Like Simmel (1955), he agrees competition is one form of conflict. Aubert reserves the term conflict for the "state of tension between two actors irrespective of how it has originated and how it is terminated," the starting point of which lies between individuals (or groups) where overt signs of antagonism exist (1963:26). Such antagonisms can be broken into two categories: value conflict (dissensus) and interest conflict (competition). Interest conflict refers to individuals or parties holding the same value for a goal or a good. So while they compete for the same object, usually in situations of scarcity, they each hold similar values in that both cherish the same thing. Strains of Simmel (and Mack) emerge: "The foremost sociological characteristic of competition is the fact that conflict in it is indirect. In so far as one gets rid of an adversary or damages him directly, one does not compete with him" (Simmel, 1955:57). It seems, therefore, that conflict can become an unintended consequence of competition. In dissensus, chasms develop between values, the source of many religious and ideological wars (Aubert, 1963). The bike trail issue would constitute an interest conflict, not a value conflict, but conflict nonetheless, in agreement with Simmel (1955) but in contrast to Mack (1965).

Then there is the matter of controversy, the term used by Sanders (1961). His definition of controversy adheres to more loosely defined concepts of community opposition. Controversy implies the existence of two conditions: active opposition and general community involvement, while making no claims about following community norms of conduct in the process. Despite the title of Coleman's monograph, *Community Conflict* (1957), he too uses the softer term of controversy, as opposed to conflict, when describing differences arising in communities. At the same time, Coleman fails to define the linguistic parameters such controversies involve.

Social conflict "is a relationship between two or more parties who...believe they have incompatible goals" (Kriesberg, 1973:17). While conflict is related to competition, they are not identical. "In the case of competition, parties are seeking the same ends whereas conflicting parties may or may not be in agreement about the desirability of particular goals" (Kriesberg, 1973:17). Ironically, consensus can also play a role in conflict. When two parties want the same thing, "the basis for a cooperative relationship exists" (Kriesberg, 1973:34), echoing Simmel (1955). Assuming this to be true, Meadville had consensus when it came to the *idea* of a bike trail but had competing interests on the particulars (where it should go).

Using such a variety of terms to describe social tension—conflict, competition, dissensus, controversy—creates its own usage conflict. While Simmel and Aubert could both conceivably classify the bike trail issue as one type of "conflict," Mack and Kriesberg would opt for more clarity by using the term "competition" (Simmel would not disagree). Sanders would call it controversy, as would Coleman—who, judging from the title of his monograph—might go so far as to call it "conflict" as well. All three terms (but not "dissensus") may be appropriately used as descriptors of the situation in Meadville; however, all of it could just be purely academic. There are those who believe controversy should be defined by locals. This is precisely how Donovan (1993) defined the concept in his study of 155 southern Californian communities, measuring controversy in terms of whether local economic development officials felt local development issues were controversial.

A Model of Community Conflict (Controversy) Initiation

Coleman is one of few attempting to propose a theoretical model for community conflict. His monograph, written in 1957 in the wake of such issues as fluoridation, school desegregation, and McCarthyism, is admittedly dated and perhaps more relevant to a different era than that faced today. But it is worthy of review in light of his contributions to more general principles of controversy. Unlike Coser (1956) and Simmel (1955) who treat conflict as a functional social phenomenon, Coleman (1957) tends to regard it as a negative aspect of community life, something to be prevented or eliminated. Notwithstanding his admission that controversy might be viewed as a measure of community life (the greater the involvement of community members in community life, the more frequent the controversy), Coleman suggests controversy sometimes can be destructive and might be avoided by eliminating elements that lead to its initiation. He cites six elements appearing in a pattern of initiation, of cases involving local governments. In "revolts against the administration," controversy often starts when any one or a combination of the following occurs:

1. The ruling administration becomes the defendant in controversy;
2. A few active oppositionists are:
    a. continually in opposition, and
    b. ideologically committed to a cause, opposing the administration;
3. An inactive mass of the general population allows itself to be governed by the administration but does not actively support it;
4. An active minority exists to support administration policies;
5. The large passive group members then become interested and involved, generally critical of the administration; and
6. Active oppositionists manipulate the new atmosphere of suspicion to meet their goals.

What relevance does this model have for Meadville? Was the bike trail issue a revolt against the administration? In some ways, yes; in other ways, no. Once trail proponents were able to (privately) convince both city and county administrations to support it, the administration was expected to carry the project through in spite of divisions between the city council and board of supervisors and divisions within the council itself (a subsequent section entitled *The Government and the Bike Trail* describes this in greater detail).

Legitimate power in the community was not with the historical preservation group that initiated the project, but with local administrations. Thus, the local administrations (mostly the council) became the defendant in the controversy while acting initially as a front for bike trail proponents. This, however, changed when significant opposition occurred. As a front and not the true initiators, the administration lacked the proper commitment to the cause to carry it through. This condition is only one of many that likely played a role in the downfall of the trail.

In regard to the first part of Coleman's second point, the minority opponent group did indeed vocally oppose other community projects (see Table 2). Of the 10 total projects for which bike trail opponents were involved based on the snowball sampling methods, 2 were supported, for a "support rate" of 20% and "opposition rate" of 80%. When the bike trail issue is excluded from the analysis, trail opponents support 50% (2 in 4) of the projects.

In marked contrast, proponents supported a total of 18 out of 20 projects for a "support rate" of 90% and "opposition rate" of 10%. When the bike trail issue is excluded from the analysis, proponents supported 75% of all other projects with which they were actively involved.

Table 2. Support/Opposition Patterns of Bike Trail Participants for the Seven Community Projects Studied

	Proponents (n=12)		Opponents (n=6)	
Projects supported	*Number*	*Percent*	*Number*	*Percent*
Total valid projects	20		10	
Total valid projects supported	18	90	2	20
Total valid projects (minus trail)	8		4	
Total valid projects (minus trail) supported	6	75	2	50

The resulting implication is that community residents who emerge as project opponents more likely oppose other projects as well. The tendency of trail opponents to oppose other unrelated issues is higher than that of trail proponents. What Coleman does not note, but perhaps implies, is that project supporters also tend to support other unrelated

projects. As for the second part of Coleman's point 2, the ideological motivation of project opponents was to protect individual property rights.

Consistent with Coleman's fourth point the trail proponents as the active group support the administration. However, points 3 and 5 do not appear to hold up in Meadville. An inactive mass of the general population did allow itself to be governed by the administration. This mass seemed to "actively" support its policies; however, what constitutes "active" involvement is not described by Coleman (1957). If "active support" constitutes the belief that "everyone can contribute to government affairs," then 93% of the resident population in Meadville believe this is true (Lasley et al., 1995). The majority would appear to support the administration. Despite this claim, evidence is inadequate suggesting the need for future research on community controversy. Such research should specifically question respondents about their general support for local government decisions and policies.

When the passive mass did get interested and involved in the bike trail (point 5), it was generally supportive rather than critical of the administration. Only the active oppositionists voiced criticism of the administration because it was supporting policies that favored the trail. Finally, the implication in point 6 is that the oppositionists are able to manipulate the passive masses to express skepticism on an issue, which, in turn, influences the decision of the administration. In Meadville, this was not necessary. Even a small contingent of project opponents was sufficient to shut down the issue arguably because the nature of politics in the community seemed to protect the stock of social capital. While Coleman admits "not all community controversies develop along these lines" (1957:9), his model merely suggests some of the elements that may be responsible, if not culpable, for precipitating widespread controversy.

Issue Context

Once initiated, issues or events usually meet certain generalizable criteria (Coleman, 1957). The perfect conditions that tend to nourish controversy involve the way issues affect the area of life community residents view as important. Coleman (1957) distinguishes three basic conditions: economics, power, and cultural values. The bike trail issue touched upon all

three "areas of life." According to proponents, the proposal would result in financial benefits to Meadville. Conflicting values regarding individualism and the appropriate sacrifice for community welfare also emerged. Power issues arose as the mayor threatened the use of eminent domain while county supervisors made personal phone calls to assure landowners this would not happen.

Community Evolution of Controversy

Before embarking on a discussion of the evolution of controversy particular to the bike trail project, it is first useful to present Coleman's general ideas on the dynamic nature of controversy. Once an issue begins the ascent into community controversy, it undergoes a series of changes in regard to both the issue and the social organization.

Changes in Issues

One of the first things to happen with regard to changes in issues is the transformation of the issue from the specific to general where small complaints transform into broader community issues (Coleman, 1957). One exception to this "rule" is the occurrence of political controversies in which there is little popular involvement when contrasted with conflicts over cultural values or economics. According to Coleman, the movement from specific to general occurs "whenever there are deep cleavages of values or interest in the community which require a spark to set them off" usually consisting of some small incident that sets off a whole chain of events leading to greater concerns (1957:10). When disputes arise that are not generated by deep cleavages in the community but more as an isolated incident usually marked by minor scuffles over power, the shift from specific to general does not occur (Coleman, 1957). According to this framework, the bike trail is a type of issue that did not involve deep community cleavages.

The emergence of new and different issues unrelated to the original issue is yet another phase Coleman suggests occurs in the evolution of controversy. "...The stable relation suppresses topics which might upset it. But once the stability of the relation *is* upset, the suppressed topics can come to the surface uninhibitedly" (Coleman, 1957:10; italics in

original). In political struggles, this "diversification of issues" shifts instead to a deliberate move by antagonists to distinguish or *differentiate* issues bringing to light all relevant arguments to recruit new members and increase solidarity among existing members (Coleman, 1957). In Meadville, while the antagonists (or opponents) did not bring to the surface new and unrelated issues, those issues that were the core of their argument against the proposal were differentiated—from funding to maintenance issues, to liability, and then safety issues for children, and so forth (discussed in a later section).

A third phase in the evolution of community controversy takes place when disagreement turns to personal antagonism. The resulting hostility can then "sustain conflict unaided by disagreement over particular issues" (Coleman, 1957:10). While evidence in Meadville shows that politics do often become personalized and did so with the bike trail project, the public nature of expressing personal antagonisms is suppressed by the normative structure of the community that discourages the vilification of one's enemies in public (Vidich and Bensman, 1968).

Changes in Social Organization

In addition to changes in issues, controversy is likely to elicit changes in the social organization of the community as it evolves (Coleman, 1957). According to Coleman's model, Stage 1 involves the polarization of social relations where intergroup relations wither and intragroup relations flourish. Stage 2 is characterized by the formation of ad hoc partisan groups serving dual functions of planning and communicating. Stage 2 serves as a catapult for Stage 3 during which new leaders emerge, typically

> men who have not been community leaders in the past, men who face none of the constraints of maintaining a previous community position, and feel none of the cross-pressures felt by members of community organizations. (Coleman, 1957:12)

Stage 3 can be equated with the emergence of bike trail opponents. In Stage 4, community organizations are drawn into the dispute under pressure from either side. Such was not the case in regard to civic organizations (see *The Role of Local Organizations* in Chapter VI). Of course, the city council and county board of supervisors were drawn in first as supporters,

then as referees. The absence of widespread civic organizational involvement is puzzling especially when the organizational ties of project proponents are examined and found to be quite strong (refer to the section on *Membership in Formal Organizations* in Chapter VIII). Coleman explains such lack of involvement in terms of the need for these organizations to remain neutral. Yet if no trail opponents belonged to those organizations, the disharmony of their membership presence would not force it to stay neutral (Coleman, 1957). An alternative explanation is that aside from the historical preservation group that initiated the idea, other groups were not interested in getting involved for whatever reason—perhaps no time, other interests, or perhaps no desire to get involved in a community battle. This last reason seems most plausible considering that the "usual shackles of community norms and internal cross-pressures which make pre-existing organizations and leaders tend to soften the dispute" (Coleman, 1957:13).

The fifth and final phase representing a change in community social organization is an increase in informal methods of communication, namely the gossip and rumors that abound with such issues (Coleman, 1957). As the controversy thickens, such informal methods begin to distort news presented through the (formal) media, helping shape perceptions important to the outcome of the controversy. Such was the case in Meadville (see *The Information Gap*).

In the News: The Public Version of Events

As Coleman (1557) and Vidich and Bensman (1968) point out, there are at least two informational structures in small, rural communities. Two different versions of events are commonplace—the public version and the private version—the former of which typically relies on reporting of public happenings and the latter of which relies on unconfirmed fragments of gossip. It is worthy to compare these two versions of events and note some of the differences in the type of information each covered about the bike trail project. In this section, the public version of events will be reviewed (and interpreted) in chronological order as it appeared in the local newspaper. The paper is often one way residents become acquainted with project events if they do not attend the meetings. As one resident noted, "I

first heard about [the trail] out of the city council news [printed in the paper]." The newspaper is an important source of public information in Meadville and is examined appropriately. However, as Coleman notes (1957), the newspaper is not an appropriate source for transmitting details about derogatory remarks, hidden power struggles, or hostility. Instead, residents turn to local interaction and informal conversations to learn about these aspects of controversy. Such information was effectively captured during the face-to-face interviews (see the sections *Government and the Bike Trail* in Chapter VI and *The Information Gap* in Chapter VII).

A few comments are warranted on the use of the newspaper as a source for research. As mentioned before, the newspaper's editor held the confidence of the community in his reporting of city council meetings. Indeed, virtually all of the 18 valid trail nominees interviewed commented that not only did the newspaper cover the trail, but each and every one of them also said the paper reported all sides of the issue, implying impartiality in the editor's reporting of events. The information local Meadville residents were exposed to in regard to the trail is chronicled in the following sections. Dates of publication are listed first followed by the newspaper headline. In most cases, stories covering council meetings were printed three days later.

November 19, 1998: "Meadville council deals with former railroad property title"

This headline formally launches the beginning of the bike trail story in the public eye. It all began when the United Methodist Church attempted to purchase land from the Cotton family for a parsonage. During private negotiations, the Church discovered that the Cottons did not actually own the land it was looking to buy, but held a quit claim deed for the property. The deed according to the article was sold to the Cottons for $500 by the railroad in 1979. (This fact is itself intriguing especially since the railroad abandoned the line six years earlier according to Meadville's centennial written by the town's oft-named historian, the former newspaper editor who left the community.) According to the Cottons, they paid this sum for a 66 by 102 foot piece of railroad right-of-way, receiving a quit claim deed in exchange. A quit claim deed is one of "conveyance whereby whatever interest the grantor [in

this case, the railroad] has in the property described in the deed is conveyed to the grantee [the Cottons] without warranty of title" (Montagne, 1989:H2). During negotiations of the sale, the Church discovered that not only did the Cottons not own the land outright (as in fee title ownership), but the railroad never owned the land to sell. In fact, the railroad had obtained an easement from the city that gave the rail company the right to use the land for rail transport until it no longer had use for it. At that time, which happened to be 1973, the land reverted back to the owner (the city). Locally, this land was commonly referred to as the Oak Street easement which followed the old rail corridor.

The issue became a city concern since it was the rightful owner of the land. This fact nullified at least from a legal standpoint the quit claim deed held by the Cottons. Despite this predicament, the lawyer brokering the deal between the Cottons and the Church requested that the city relinquish its claims and hand over the title to the Cottons so they could complete the sale with the Church. Without a title, the Church was not interested. Abiding by this request conflicted with promises the council had made to support a bike trail along the Oak Street easement. "Disposing of the property for one section of the street could mean that the trail could not go through the area." Further complicating the issue was an argument made by the city attorney that the city's claim to the land might not be upheld in court should it go that far. Under a clause called "adverse possession," an adjacent property owner (i.e., the Cottons) is granted legal ownership if they believe property belongs to them and the real owner does not voice objections to improvements the adjacent "owner" makes, such as the construction of outbuildings.

Concerns were raised by "Stanley," the mayor, that any decision the council made at this juncture would set a precedent for other property owners adjoining the Oak Street right-of-way. The city attorney disagreed and said he felt this was a "special case" and not one that would necessarily set an example. (Ultimately, Stanley was correct as other property owners would eventually object to the city taking "their" land.)

A motion made to sell the land to the Cottons while retaining a utility easement (not a recreational one) was voted down (2-3) since it effectively eliminated the future possibility of a trail. The names of the council member who voted for this motion and those who voted

against it became a matter of public record when the newspaper printed their names and votes in the cover story summary article that described the meeting.

Another motion was suggested, this time proposing that landowners adjacent to the Oak Street right-of-way be granted a 50-year easement to use the property as they had in the past; the motion passed by a 3 to 2 vote. Those opposing this motion were the members who supported the previous one. Ensuing discussion included a comment from the attorney representing the Cottons who said the city's decision would force the Cottons to take legal action to obtain the title. A rebuttal was offered by one council member who wanted the trail reasoning that the city should not be forced to give up its interest in the property merely because the Cottons had made an error in judgment 20 years ago by buying a quit claim deed from the railroad that did not own the land to sell.

December 10, 1998: "Meadville council reverses decision on Oak Street right-of-way issue"

Three weeks later, the council changes its mind. "More information, including minutes of a 1978 city council meeting when the members voted to pass the property on to the [Cottons], brought a change in action by the city council." While "the city never legally transferred the land to the Cottons in 1978, the minutes of the meeting illustrated that the city knew that the Cottons were taking the land and would help a case seeking clear title" according to the city attorney. Reinforcing his position at the November meeting, the city attorney encouraged the council once again to give title of the disputed property to the Cotton family as the surfacing of the 1978 meeting minutes were seen to hurt the claim of the city under the adverse possession clause. The attorney for the Cottons, in a conciliatory move toward a defeated council, offered to contact the Church to see if it would provide assurances that it would not block the trail "at some point in the future if it becomes a reality." One of the council members whose voting pattern reflected his support of the trail said "the discussion he had heard from the Methodists was that the trail might not be a problem through the area" despite no official response from the parsonage search committee. Based on historical precedence, informal assurances, and word-of-mouth, the city reconsidered its earlier position and decided to grant full title of the land to the Cotton

family. A standard utility easement would be attached to the sale but not one for recreational purposes, legally excluding any claims or rights the city might have in the future for a potential bike trail. By its actions, the city took the position that informal channels and trust would be the road to cooperation in the future if the "plan for a trail ever becomes more than a possibility."

December 24, 1998: "Plans for trail across city offered"

Two weeks later, the county engineer in training, a young, new resident to the community, presented to the council the results of a preliminary feasibility study he had conducted into a possible route for the trail. "Lance" outlined technical specifications of the trail, which included an eight-foot wide asphalt surface flanked by two-foot graded shoulders on each side. He also proposed a possible route that linked up the city park on the west side of town with the two-mile, unpaved and county maintained trail on the east side of town. That route started at the trailhead of the county trail, passed due west by the school, jogged north and then west along the disputed Oak Street right-of-way which covered about 13 city blocks. From there, Lance put the trail south along a creek bed, and then west across a cow pasture, eventually linking it to the ballfields and swimming pool at the city park on the west side of town. Some city council members had earlier expressed concerns about the safety of a trail that connected with the county trail, making it necessary to put the trail across a highway. After contacting the Iowa Department of Transportation, Lance assured them it would not be an issue and that the city would be able to obtain the appropriate permits for the crossing.

What was the estimated cost for the trail? $300,000. Who would foot the bill? Competitive grants such as the State Recreational Trails Program or Federal Enhancement Program could be sought to cover $225,000. The remaining $75,000 would be covered by the city or the city in collaboration with the county. Instead of actual monies, the local obligation could be paid by providing in-kind services for the project. In addition to the financial cost, Lance noted that "there will be a good deal of negotiation needed to work out the trail path, so...public support for the project would be very important." At that point, the

city council decided to schedule a public hearing to find out just what the public reaction to this proposal would be. Objections were raised by the mayor who expressed a concern that the city would end up paying for maintenance 20 years down the road. The cost of maintenance was estimated at $26,000 for resurfacing ten years after construction. In spite of his objection, the council decided to take the issue to the public. "Several city council members have expressed support for such a project, but they want to hear from city residents about their feelings for the path..."

January 7, 1999: "January 21 set for meeting to test support for walking trail in Meadville"

With the new year ahead, community residents were greeted with the headline above. To be held at the county courthouse but run as a special session of the city council, the meeting "is being set up as an opportunity for people in the community to hear about the possibilities from the county assistant engineer, who has been doing some preliminary work on the project." The council also planned to gauge public support for the trail by taking a headcount at the meeting. People who could not attend the meeting were encouraged to "express their opinion to a council member with a call or letter."

Besides this public notice, another event was reported in the paper that would directly affect the trail project. In the newspaper's account of the January 4th meeting on the general state of city finances, a minor disagreement developed between Stanley and a council member. It began when Stanley suggested a possible solution to the dilemma the city faced on state tax caps that limited spending. By increasing the limit on the amount of tax money the city could spend from its general fund, the city could have more revenue to make certain purchases. Moreover, he thought the cost of the bike trail project would be too high and that he would rather see money spent on streets. In response, one of the council members accused Stanley of personal politics by stating that city officials need to be consistent in their treatment of city finances. "When we were discussing purchasing the city maintenance barn from the state and the city hall remodeling project, I didn't hear us mention tax limits. We need to treat all projects alike when we talk about tax increases, not get on the bandwagon about tight finances for some projects and not mention it for other projects." Although an

uninformed reader may not find these comments particularly disturbing, further analysis in this thesis will show that such arguments were indicative of the tense relationship between the mayor and that particular council member, which culminated in the mayor's resignation one month later.

January 21, 1999: "Trail interest to be tested in meeting tonight"

A small notice announcing the public hearing on the trail appeared in the upper right-hand corner on the front page of the Meadville News. In the opposite corner, the resignation of a city council member moving to another community was announced. That member was a trail supporter.

January 28, 1999: "Opinions sought on trail project"

In this edition of the Meadville News, the public hearing garnered the prime spot in the newspaper on the front page. "Some of the property owners near the proposed trail site were among those speaking out against the proposal at the meeting. There were also several people speaking in favor of the project." According to the paper, no conclusive decision was made one way or the other as comments were still being solicited by the council. "If enough positive comment is received, the council could then give the go ahead to begin looking for grant money for the project." Once local support was established in favor of the proposal, local officials could apply for appropriate grants and begin negotiations with adjacent property owners along the Oak Street right-of-way. A July deadline was cited as the pivotal point when the city council had to decide to move forward with the grant application process. But as Kulig and Waldner note (1999), development decisions based on the availability of funding may have one strike against them if they have not also been initiated out of a true community need.

At the hearing, one of the adjacent landowners who was interviewed as an opponent of the bike trail project voiced his support for the project but only if it went as far as the school. That way people could park and walk the short span across the highway over to the pre-existing county trailway and avoid his land. "He was not in favor of the trail adjoining

his property and said he thought that people would not use the trail early in the morning or late at night when many people walk because it would not be lit." Another adjacent landowner was mentioned by name in the write-up as voicing her opposition because she would not be able to keep her cattle away from the trail should it cross her pasture.

Reasons suggested for supporting the bike trail as outlined in the assistant county engineer's presentation included expanding the existing county trail on the east side of town to over three miles; providing a safe place for walkers, bicyclists, and rollerbladers; enhancing the community's recreational assets; promoting physical wellness; and preparing for future, related developments. The wife of the council member who accused the mayor of being selective about the projects he supported financially publicly stated her support, citing it as a positive influence especially for "the handicapped." Another supporter mentioned by name was a county supervisor who spoke for the board when he said the board was willing to help with the project because of its countywide relevance. The meeting thus included two speakers for and two speakers against the trail.

In response to public feedback, the assistant engineer explained that the city was inflexible as far as using the Oak Street right-of-way, but that other parts of the proposed route were subject to change. He also noted that "it would be his intent that the project work with property owners, not run over them, when seeking easements or seeking to purchase" property from them.

In addition to reporting the details of the public hearing a week after its occurrence, the newspaper at the same time carried an editorial favoring the trail, noting that not only would it be safe and scenic, but would serve as a community building tool as well. The editor argued that it would bring together people of all ages and of all physical abilities, including people in wheelchairs, to provide "a new sense of community as people of many ages shared in using it to bring better health to the people... and a facility that would be safer than the ones currently used..." He goes on to describe a less desirable alternative that was informally suggested, one that would include enforcing the city ordinance that property owners have a sidewalk along every street on their property, and that they properly maintain them. In effect, he argued that complying with the ordinance would cost much more than a walking trail. The

trail, in addition to providing a safer route for walkers than the streets or bumpy sidewalks, would provide "a new sense of community" as people meet along the trail each day. Another benefit would be its potential as a multiplier effect.

> I can see the day when a trail across the community would link up with the camping area at the lake on the drawing board east of Meadville. Families who were camping at the lake could bicycle into Meadville to take a swim at the pool, pick up supplies at the local stores, come to town for a meal, or spend an evening at a city activity or visit the bowling alley...If the community can come to a consensus...I think it is doable. And now looks like the perfect time to work toward the project.

Rounding out the trail feature in the newspaper was a quarter page ad on the sports page that read in boldface type: "STOP! SIT DOWN AND WRITE A LETTER EXPRESSING YOUR SUPPORT OF A PAVED WALKING TRAIL ACROSS MEADVILLE. Just wishing we had a nice place to walk, roller blade or bike WILL NOT make it happen. MAKE IT HAPPEN! Send your letter to the Meadville City Council. State funding is available for 80% of the cost. There will never be a better opportunity." At the time, perhaps residents in the community did not consider who placed the ad. Or they figured the editor did since he printed an editorial in favor of the trail. But it was not the editor. Of the 18 interviews we conducted, one resident actively involved in the trail conceded she had privately paid for the ad and only the editor and the researcher knew. The reasons she chose to keep her support secret will be examined in a subsequent section.

February 4, 1999: "[Jeff Gilmore] named new council member..."

A new city council member replaced the one who resigned earlier. The new member would serve the rest of the former member's term "unless city residents decide they want an election to fill the vacancy and file petitions to that effect." In addition to going over the city's budget, the council again addressed the bike trail issue. The mayor reported having met with the county board of supervisors to determine the extent of their support in response to their announcement at the public meeting. The mayor had returned to the council to state the county's position on the trail as one of moral but not financial support. The issue of whether the county would continue to offer the services of the assistant engineer remained unknown.

Also according to the mayor, residents' responses to the council either against or in favor of the trail were trickling in with more for it than against it. However, he went on to speculate how to treat votes from people in the county but outside of Meadville if the county was not willing to provide financial backing.

February 18, 1999: "Mayor resigns, new council member sworn in at council meeting"

The day was not dawning a particularly rosy one for the mayor. After a dispute over a subdivision ordinance with the council member with whom he had already clashed, the mayor resigned. The dispute erupted when the council member who had earlier accused the mayor of making tax money available to pet projects questioned Stanley's decision on a subdivision ordinance. According to the paper, this led to "an exchange." What that exchange contained was not printed; however, it was printed that the councilman suggested the mayor resign, who responded "by writing out a brief resignation statement and leaving the meeting immediately." This followed a heated debate about the bike trail issue which was on the agenda before the subdivision ordinance. As it relates to the bike trail, this is the version the public read about the incident:

> Earlier in the meeting, [the mayor] had become upset when [named] board of supervisor member came to the meeting to represent the supervisors and say that the supervisors would support the proposed walking and bicycling trail project with manpower and equipment. [The mayor] had attended a supervisor's meeting where [two of the three] were present and came back to the council with the determination of his meeting...that they were not interested in helping with the project at the present time. [Named supervisor] said that the board had met again when he was present and were offering the support of personnel and equipment to help with the project. [The mayor] said he felt that it looked like he was lying to the people when he relayed the information he had received at the earlier meeting with the board. "I'm not here to stir anything up," [named supervisor] said, "I just want to let the council know that the board of supervisors will help with work that could be part of the matching if the grant is received."

Prior to the mayor's resignation, further discussion on the bike trail revealed that the council had received a number of responses to their request for public input as had the county engineer. The mayor was suggesting the council proceed slowly on the trail issue in light of the recommendation of the city attorney. A councilman suggested that the city

contact property owners adjacent to the Oak Street right-of-way to solicit their feelings on the proposal. That way, they might have a better indicator of the potential problems they faced. This the council agreed upon.

March 1, 1999: "Budget accepted, mayor's resignation accepted..."

An update on the bike trail revealed that 36 property owners had been sent surveys, and a total of 19 had been received, with 11 opposed and 8 in favor. The mayor's resignation was also accepted officially although the paper announced that the letter penned in anger two weeks before was not read publicly at the meeting. In order to avoid a cost (to the city) of $2000 to hold a special election for a new mayor, the council was going to name a replacement as long as citizens did not circulate a petition for an election.

March 15, 1999: "City council names new mayor, talks about trail, policing Monday"

A new mayor was appointed, a retired school principal. The council also reviewed alternatives to the proposed bike trail route due to opposition from adjacent property owners. As one council member who supported the project put it, "I'm not sure the city wants to be in the position of forcing the trail down people's throats." Meanwhile, this same member referred to "big problems" with the United Methodist Church property (purchased from the Cottons) and a prominent local landowning opponent. Another daunting obstacle highlighted by the council was the concrete plant that straddled the proposed route. The council then resigned itself to considering alternatives. Some of the proposals included improving and widening city sidewalks and building a separate trail around the city park on the west side of town. Another suggestion was to put the trail through the town square, eliminating the city's eligibility to apply for outside funding.

April 5, 1999: "[Rutherford] sworn in, walking trail, zoning discussed Monday"

A county supervisor and the assistant engineer attended a city council meeting to exchange information regarding the results of the city's adjacent property owner survey and, in light of the opposition, to discuss alternatives. The council was officially withdrawing its

support. One of the alternatives discussed included constructing a new trail from the county trailway to the school, then following city sidewalks across town to the city park. Yet in order to get funding, the engineer noted that the trail had to be multi-use, not just a walking trail, which meant significant (and costly) sidewalk improvements would have to be made. A committee of two council members was appointed to look into the possibility of obtaining funding for a shorter version of the trail that linked the school with the county-maintained trail east of town that would be supplemented by a loop around the city park. Mention was made of inviting the park board to participate in the new trail plans.

April 19, 1999: "Sewer project back to square one"

The bike trail project submits to sewage issues. The committee of two reported back to the council that sidewalk improvements would be prohibitively expensive for one portion and that perhaps the council could look into enforcing a city mandate that residents take responsibility for sidewalk maintenance on their property. The city council was also invited to a May 12 meeting of the park board that had on their agenda a discussion of the possibility of a trail around the city park. At that point, there was little interest left in the trail.

The Role of Local Organizations

The only organization mentioned in newspaper articles about the trail involved the city council and board of supervisors. Yet Meadville has a variety of formal groups. Local organizations can often provide a setting in which individuals who are unable to achieve goals alone can come together under a common initiative to promote a project. Membership or affiliation with such groups thus becomes an important part of analyzing development efforts. There are many different kinds of groups with varying reasons for existence. Such groups can be classified into broad categories based on their common purpose. Groups in this study were divided into six different kinds: 1) fraternal and interest,[4] 2) political and civic,[5]

---

[4] The fraternal and interest group category is based on a common membership interest where the members' identity with the group is the primary motivation for joining, followed by a commitment to service. Although this is a departure from the scheme presented by Babchuk and Booth (1969) who combined service and

3) business and professional,[6] 4) community service,[7] 5) church,[8] and 6) recreational groups.[9] Residents were asked to name organizations or groups that first became involved in the bike trail project (Table 3).

Table 3. Organizations First Became Involved in the Bike Trail Issue

Organizations first involved in the trail (n=13)	No. different mentions	Type of organization	Percent of mentions[1]
City Council	9	Community service	32%
County Board of Supervisors	7	Community service	25%
School	7	Community service	25%
Historic Preservation Group	3	Political and civic	11%
County Conservation Board	1	Community service	4%
City Park Board	1	Community service	4%
Totals	28	Community service=25 (89%) Political and civic=3 (11%)	101%

[1]Does not equal 100% due to rounding.

fraternal organizations, the nomenclature of fraternal and interest group allows the inclusion of ad hoc, non-service groups such as property owners' associations and other issue-based groups. Among those included in this category include the Lions Club, Rotary, American Legion, Men's and Women's clubs, Kiwanis, Optimist Club, Jaycees, Mason's, Amvets, Ruritans, and senior citizens.

[5] Political and civic groups were categorized according to their broader primary interests beyond the self identity of its members where the community or specific projects are primary motivations for membership. These include the Civic League, Booster clubs, community clubs, historical clubs, charities, youth centers, and betterment/promotions committees.

[6] Types of groups included in this category are the chamber of commerce, economic development groups such as county development corporations, job-related groups, unions, and co-op boards.

[7] Community service groups have been created to encompass many groups that would otherwise have been included usually in an "other" category. In this scheme, most of the groups are formal institutions and receive local, county, state, or even federal funding. These include city or county government bodies, park boards, social services, hospital boards, schools, Extension, fire and emergency service groups, utility groups, banks, newspapers, housing groups, and daycare groups.

[8]Church groups may include church boards and committees, bible study, and ministerial associations, but not simply congregational members or teaching positions.

[9]Recreational groups include local hobby groups, sports groups, and art councils.

Out of the 28 responses that were mentioned by both trail proponents and opponents, 25 were community service groups, spanning five different groups. These included the city council, county board of supervisors, school, county conservation board, and city park board. Aside from these community service groups, only one other kind—a political and civic group—was mentioned three times. Noticeably absent is mention of fraternal and interest groups. Moreover, business groups were also not recognized as involved, such as the local chamber of commerce or the county development corporation, both of which might have a vested interest in a successful trail outcome and its potential effect on the local economy.

Government and the Bike Trail

Since government groups constitute more than half of the initiating groups mentioned, it is useful to analyze them in more depth. Meadville has thus far been characterized as a close-knit community whose residents enjoy a safe, trusting, and intimate social environment. However, the intense relations and frequent interactions that produce these features can also pose a problem. Rural residents living in geographically isolated communities such as Meadville may not always be content with the multiplexity of roles they play. The dual nature of relationships can often provide unwanted complications in the form of relationships that can become too intimate and stifling. And even though some residents cite privacy as a virtue of small-town living, there often is little privacy for those caught in the social web in rural communities because of the close circles in which they operate. For them, anonymity is not an option leaving some residents subject to the pressures of informal networks. Such pressures can arise out of formal group membership. Interaction in both formal and informal situations exposes individuals to observe common norms of behavior arising out of associations. "What cannot be emphasized too strongly is...that other people's attitudes are part of the environment to which all but the most self-reliant loner must inevitably adapt" (Reisman, 1990:190). Only the disenfranchised are free to act as they choose.

The Importance of Local Government Sponsorship

In *A Citizens' Manual For Transforming Abandoned Rail Corridors into Multipurpose Public Paths* (1987), the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy recommends gaining the support of local government bodies before taking on a trail project. As an aside, the Conservancy also tries to prepare trail proponents for the possible lackluster reaction they may get from government by stating that "the majority of politicians...don't want to stick their necks out on an issue that could get them into trouble with even a few of their constituents..." (1987:45). This section will, in part, explain why.

In Meadville, the support of government was crucial to the success of the project, and both sides knew it, for government had to sign on as a willing sponsor in order to be eligible for the necessary state/federal recreation grants.[10] Once grants could be acquired, the city would be required for maintenance and, should the need arise, use its legitimacy in the community to acquire and manage trail lands. Therefore, it became necessary for proponents to convince local government that such a trail would benefit the community while opponents tried to convince it otherwise. The following analysis of government decision-making processes relies on comments made by the 18 leaders/residents interviewed for their active involvement in the bike trail issue.

---

[10] In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was passed authorizing the federal government to provide financial aid for six years to transportation-related projects, with $1 billion allocated to multi-use trails (Rails-to-Trails, 1998). In 1998, a new bill called the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21) was passed, shoring up federal trail dollars until the year 2003. Trail development projects are eligible for funding under twelve different programs, but in general, two of those are most available for trails like the one in Meadville—the Transportation Enhancements Activities program (TE or TEA) ($3.6 billion available nationally for the six-year duration) and the Recreational Trails Program ($270 million available). Grant applications are submitted by state or local government agencies, and occasionally by trail groups or land trusts, to state DOT officials who make funding decisions as part of their role as administrators of transportation-related projects. Under both the TEA program and Recreational Trails program, a minimum of 20% of trail funds must be provided by the project sponsor, with the remaining 80% covered by the grants (RTC, 1998). These were funding sources the government in Meadville was intending to tap should the proposed trail pass muster of local citizens.

The Start of the Trail

Out of the five different groups mentioned as initiators of the bike trail project, the city council received 32% of the responses. And while the newspaper covered the initial land sale that helped launch the trail issue into the public arena, much was happening behind the scenes that did not appear in the paper. This is the story of the bike trail according to the 18 valid trail nominees. Their stories fill in many of the gaps left by the newspaper and reveal much about the informal structure of information exchange in the community.

Regarding the role of government, the bike trail story is best explained through the voices of the residents who were most involved in it from the start, namely the former mayor and a prominent professional person, "Ben." As Ben described it, the Historic Preservation Team (of which he was a member) was the very first initiator.

> The Team undertook the preservation of the depot and also identified as one of our goals the right-of-way bike trail from the depot connecting to the [county park] trail. We did that for a couple of reasons, most notably because there was a connecting point to the depot across the community. And it also protected the [city-owned] right-of-way from infringement of houses and other private, non-public endeavors...And so as an appointed city commissioner, we identified that and brought that to the city council's attention...

The city council did not initiate the project, but was obviously recognized (incorrectly) from the results in Table 3 as the initiating group. This may be explained in terms of the constant exposure of the city council in the local paper and their decision-making role in the project. The Historic Preservation Team (also call the CLG Team—short for Certified Local Government) only received 11% of the mentions associated with the question on which organizations first became involved in the trail effort. This 11% is in contrast to the 32% of responses attributed to the council. As Ben explained, the trail was a goal of the Preservation Team to improve access to the recently renovated train depot. However, when the Team discovered that the potential trail site was in immediate danger of becoming officially absorbed by adjacent landowners during a land sale, it evolved into an issue of land control. A sense of urgency caused by the pending sale spurred Ben to approach the city council on behalf of the Preservation Team.

> [The trail] was just a goal for the CLG team and we shared it with the city council, but it wasn't a community effort [then]. It became a community effort...when the city clerk and I discussed the possibility because the Methodist Church wanted to buy one of the properties that would infringe on the goal created by the bike trail. And so that was discussed at the city council meeting and I think there were attorney challenges to it. What had happened was the private property owner had gone to the railroad and gotten a quit claim deed for the railroad right-of-way. Even though the railroad couldn't give them a legal quit claim deed, they had still paid $500 for the land that abutted his house and even built a driveway and garden/toolshed on the right-of-way. He had gone to the city council back a number of years ago before there ever was a CLG when he built his house and said to them, "Would you approve of me buying this from the railroad?" And for some unknown reason, the council said yes, go ahead. So there it was in their minutes, a record that they had officially—even though they can't give away city land, even though they had acted illegally—they still did it, and so this time, they went ahead and approved it and didn't challenge it in court.

The former mayor had a few details to add to the bike trail story. According to "Stanley,"

> It was brought to me by [Ben] several years ago, and I told him at that time that the city wasn't interested in it because we couldn't finance it. And then this last time it came up, he went to the supervisors. The supervisors had the county engineer run a preliminary on it, and then they brought it to the council. And I felt like this was [Ben] trying to slip in the back door, which he did.

Apparently, this was not the first time the trail came up. The mayor seems to have been the greatest obstacle the first time around. Ben was not going to make the same mistake twice by approaching what he understood to be an uncooperative mayor. Instead, he took his proposal to a receptive board of supervisors who were more amenable to Ben's proposal. Another member of the Preservation Team told how the city and county ended up cooperating without the mayor's involvement.

> [At first the Historic Preservation Team] hadn't circulated much information on it...because we had our hands full with the depot. But this year, the county engineer and the city [clerk] said 'We think it's time to work on this and we better do something before this whole thing gets all these private landowners backed up on it.'

Thus, they reached a mutual agreement that city action should be taken before opponents had time or interest to organize against it. Yet opponents overcame the tactics of supporters who gave them little time to act as a cohesive unit. But the failure of the project should not be attributed to its hasty offensive or timing, but also to strained relationships between the

mayor and city and county government representatives, as well as Ben, the CLG representative and prominent school professional.

The City, the School, and the County—Power Struggles and Personal Politics

As the county seat, Meadville is the home of two administrative units—the county and city—where cooperation between the two can be less than forthcoming. One councilman expressed doubt about a future partnership between the two regarding the trail: "I'm not sure the county and city could get along well enough to ever make it work." Another resident confirmed these suspicions when he noted in more general terms that the "county and the local government don't get along very well." The mayor corroborated these misgivings by expressing suspicions about the actions of the county supervisors on the bike trail. Nor was Ben exempt from a critical assessment.

> The supervisors had to have the county engineer do [a preliminary] because they spent some money on it, but then they turned it around and said they were just doing it to help us [the city]. We never asked them to do it in the first place. But I think [Ben] had. But the city didn't ask the board of supervisors to do this. They took it on themselves, but I think probably [Ben] asked to try to put pressure on the city to do this. Because this is a little bit his style. In between the lines, I think that's why.

Ben had a different perspective, drawing yet other parties in—those of the county sheriff (one of the land-owning opposition leaders) and the Methodist Church, whose pastor was another person opposing the trail (but did not qualify as a valid project participant). As Ben explained it, he approached trail promotion from a tactical standpoint, not an underhanded one, where persuasion was the only way he determined he could get support in a community at the mercy of small town politics.

> I mustered all of these other forces around [the city council] knowing that probably some pieces of this they might not want to do. Because undoubtedly some of them are Methodist and have something to do with the Methodist parish house that cuts the railroad track in two. And maybe the county sheriff owns a lot right down here and has expressed that he doesn't want any damn trail behind is house.

For Ben, the Church and the sheriff were motivated strictly by selfish reasons. His use of an expletive, the only one used in the close to three hour interview, reveals his frustration and hostility for the people who derailed the trail plans, the success of which he held himself

accountable. Use of the pronoun "I" reveals that it had become a personal crusade to which Ben was affectively bound.

In addition to harboring hostility for Ben, the mayor did not get along well with county government. Stanley took it personally that the supervisors changed their mind about supporting the trail midway through negotiations, thus making a mockery of him.

> The county changed their minds and said they would help a little but...at the official meeting, they told me "no."...Then the supervisors discussed it when I was gone, and they changed their minds and came back to the council, only they said they wanted to make sure there was no misunderstanding that they would help. But that's not what they told me at their meeting, and...that made me out the liar because I reported the way they had told me at the meeting.

Recall that this incident was reported in the February 18, 1999 issue of the local newspaper. Upon Stanley's return from the supervisors' meeting (which, incidentally, was attended by only two of the three supervisors), he reported back to the council their unfavorable response. But having expressed an early objection to the council members about the trail in the first place, they must have been a little lukewarm about his version of events. Had there been a strand of trust between the mayor and the council already, he would not have been concerned that it looked like he was lying. Stanley explained his early position and criticism of the trail and related it to the council's response:

> The trail is one [project] I criticized very strongly...I was going to support it, and it wasn't going to go down Oak Street from day one [because of opposition], and I told [the council] that. They wouldn't believe me, and they ran into trouble on Oak Street. I voiced my opinion about [another controversial issue] and they told me I was crazy and they went ahead and voted it in, and now [the council is] in trouble with that.

An Emotional Mayoral Exit

Since the supervisors' initial refusal to support the bike trail fell conveniently in line with the "wishes" of the mayor, council members were distrustful of Stanley's story especially when a supervisor later showed up at a council meeting and said the board would endorse the project. The mayor provided the following excerpt as it relates to the nature of the tension between himself and the supervisors.

> See, [the city] had to come up with $60,000 to match this grant, or in-kind work. And so I went to the supervisors and they told me they were in favor of the trail, but not anything to do financially. I reported this back to the council and back to [Ben], and then [the supervisors] changed their minds and decided they might help a little with in-kind. They sent out some surveys and most came back in favor of it...but about 80% of the surveys that came back were from outside the city of [Meadville]. So if we weren't going to get any help from the county, I thought we should throw those out, and that changed the picture dramatically on the pros and cons. Because I didn't think that was a fair way to do it. If the county was going to help with this, then [the surveys not from Meadville but within the county] would all be legitimate.

The mayor reveals the ways in which he was using leverage to test the county's commitment to help the city. He reasoned that county surveys could not be considered "legitimate" to be included in the count of supporters if the county was not willing to back it financially. The city depended on the support of the county if they were going to get the bike trail going, and considering the history of the relationship and distrust already between them, the mayor was trying to force their hand. Eventually, this created an untenable situation for the mayor who was already having a disagreement with one council member over a variety of community issues. The tension finally erupted in an emotional outburst from the mayor during the infamous city council meeting. Recall that it was reported in the local newspaper as an "emotional exchange." As the wife of the councilman told researchers later, that "exchange," constituted a minor scuffle in which the mayor hit the councilman over the head with a stack of papers. The newspaper as a reputable and factual public source of information did not reveal this detail, excluding a description of the actual encounter.

An apparent lack of trust between the council members and the mayor, as well as between the mayor and the supervisors, reached a head at the council meeting that night. The situation "degenerated from a disagreement over issues to direct antagonism" which violated community norms of cooperation and civility (Coleman, 1957:21), thus prompting the mayor to make an exit. Despite having formal authority (power given by the system), he had little influence (power invested by access or control to resources) and was therefore an ineffective leader (Powers, 1967).

Conflict within the Council

Unfortunately, such power struggles did not stop at the interagency level. Allusions have already been made to the conflict between the mayor and the city council. The tension was no secret in the community. Residents were willing to discuss the mayor's rash behavior during the trail issue during our interviews with them, some even dismissing his behavior as unrepresentative of local government.

> I think it was mainly the mayor [who talked about condemning land for the trail] which the mayor had no authority to say that. He's not the spokesman probably.

The mayor, commenting on the position he took concerning the proceedings, noted how the public had labeled him an opponent, despite feeling torn on the issue.

> I was treading the center line on the trail. I was kind of in favor of it and not in favor of it. So by being that way, I immediately became opposed to it in the public's eyes.

He was right. Others, even his close friends, reflected that sentiment when they spoke of the mayor.

> Sometimes he would be pretty negative...but nobody else was ever negative.

> [The mayor] would have been influential in holding it back, I'm sure. I would say he was definitely against it. He's a good friend of mine.

Despite the public perception that he was opposed to the trail, landowning opponents did not count him as one of them, primarily because they attributed threats of condemnation to him. Nor was he an ally of the opponents. One woman who owned a farm along the proposed route who had come out publicly against the project said with indignation,

> [The opponents] say they aren't in favor of [the trail] and the city or the mayor would say, 'It doesn't make any difference anyway—we'll just condemn it and take it.' [The mayor] said that!

An interview with one city councilman corroborated the woman's story. According to the councilman, the mayor introduced the subject of condemnation at a council meeting one evening. The councilman felt relieved, however, when he heard that recent state law excused him from carrying out the mayor's threat of taking land away from fellow residents.

> I think the walking and bicycle trail would be a great thing, but I'm not in favor of it. Of course, the state government fixed that so we couldn't condemn land to put in

> walking/bike trails. The state legislature passed a law that you cannot use condemnation for private land for use of walking and bicycle trails. So that gets me out of that deal because I was not in favor of it anyway.

The law to which he refers is House File 476 prohibiting seizure of agricultural land for "private development purposes" which boldly includes recreational trails among its list of private uses (see Appendix A for a discussion of House File 476 and related trail legislation).

An Unsupportive Government

Because of the volatile nature surrounding the bike trail issue, few elected government officials were willing to take leadership responsibility for it.

> Supervisor: [The trail] is more of a city council issue than it is a supervisor issue. [The city engineer] has done a lot of work on this project and he's offered to do a lot more. [But] it's more of a city issue.
>
> County engineer: I just provided [the council] with information. It's up to the five members and the mayor to do with it as they see fit.
>
> Councilman: [The trail] became a community issue by the county engineer. He did some research and there are some grants available. He came to the city council with the proposed route.

Above, one supervisor described considerable county involvement with the issue but then declined to say that it was necessarily a county responsibility, but rather a city matter. And yet there is clear evidence of supervisor involvement in that supervisors commissioned the city engineer to do a preliminary on the project. And, if this was mostly a city issue, why did one opponent say she received a call from a supervisor asking for her opinion? How was it that the supervisors could provide assurance that city control would not usurp county control in the matter of eminent domain?

> The supervisors are all that I talked to. They initiated the call and said they would stand behind the property owners. [They] told me that they wouldn't let [the city] condemn anything.

Even though county supervisors were unwilling to take the reins of leadership in the bike trail project, they still played a crucial and active role.

> [The board of supervisors] had a meeting with all the mayors of ten cities to see what they thought of it. They were all supportive of it. The reason we did that was because

> we really represent the county. We kind of wanted a consensus of what the mayors in the other towns thought about the county helping on this project.

Yet four months after this mayoral assembly, the supervisors publicly preferred not to be linked with the trail issue. Instead, the rhetoric they employed was that it had been a city responsibility. But residents and supervisors alike revealed that behind the scenes, the supervisors were quite involved.

The reluctance of rural, local politicians to get involved in controversial issues is documented extensively by Vidich and Bensman (1968). As they point out, people on the village council in "Springdale" also had difficulty dealing with local dissension. Part of the reason, they say, is because the Springdale government was reactive rather than proactive, and fervently (and furtively) avoided conflict.

> When an issue comes up on which the positions of all board members are not known...a long process of discussion...ensues [in which] no member irrevocably commits himself on an issue... As a consequence of these dynamics, in any situation which suggests that differences of opinion exist, action is postponed or delayed to a subsequent meeting or indefinitely. (Vidich and Bensman, 1968:127)

After the meetings, board members try to define each others' position through informal discussion and negotiations. This technique is akin to the one employed by the county board of supervisors and to a lesser extent (relative to the supervisors), that of the Meadville city council. The process Vidich and Bensman describe eliminates the possibility of public debate; when a decision absolutely must be made, action is only taken by the council when it is clear that responsibility has diffused into unanimity.

> Until unanimity is reached, there is a tacit agreement to discuss the proposal and to postpone the decision until the time comes when either by wearing down, time limitations or accident a formula is found... In no instance is a formula based on a recognition of conflicting interests which require balancing. (Vidich and Bensman, 1968:128)

In Meadville, the difference is that this process occurred at a broader community level, not just the administrative level. Public input was a prerequisite before the council decided to postpone a decision until time limitations in the form of the state Trails Enhancement Act funding deadline silenced public discussion.

The Process of Bowing to the Opposition

The tentative cooperation between the county board of supervisors and city council continued up until the public meeting was held. After the supervisors commissioned the county engineer to do a preliminary feasibility study of the trail, the city council decided to hold a special session at the county courthouse. The engineer would direct the meeting by giving a presentation of his findings and fielding questions related to the technical aspects of the trail. The January meeting was attended by approximately 40 people. The purpose of the meeting was to not only get a feel for the public reaction, but to allow the opposition a public forum for expressing its position. Proponents and opponents were in attendance, both sides of which expressed their views. As one resident described the scene,

> The new county engineer was very good at the meeting. He had three people present opposing views. And had he known his way around the community and knew people, I think he would have been fine. He could have handled it all. He could have visited with them until he saw what their objections really were and built around them. But he didn't know who he was working for or against at that meeting.

The implication in the previous statement is that not only was neutrality not allowed, it was simply not possible. The engineer "didn't know *who* he was working for or against" not *what*. Once again, the line is blurred between issues and people. Newcomers are in a particularly difficult situation as they lack the knowledge of political alliances within the community. This resident noted that the engineer, as a newcomer, lacked access to the local stock of social capital—he was not part of the network of strong ties or trust and therefore lacked the ability to assuage residents' fears. This resident was therefore not surprised that nothing was resolved at the meeting.

Further actions were to be taken to measure not the public reaction per se, but the *extent* of their reaction. One month after the public meeting, the city council sent out a survey to adjacent property owners to solicit their opinions on the proposal. It seems that the city did not feel the public meeting had adequately given them the information they needed from the opponents. Apparently, few opponents attended the meeting. The mayor explained:

> The people who came to the meeting didn't live along the trail, and we were getting complaints, and so I told the council this and they thought we were just talking, so

> then they said 'Let's run a survey.' So the town sent out a survey to people along the route that this was going to run behind their houses, and it came back pretty negative. So they kind of backed off getting it into Oak Street, and that's where it stood when I left.

By mid-February, the mayor had resigned. Two weeks after his resignation, the paper reported that a total of 19 responses had been received from the landowners, split with 8 for and 11 against. After the public presentation and landowner survey, the impasse left the council to decide the proper course of action based on feedback they had received. The council chose inaction and the issue was tabled.

> Someone told me through the grapevine that [the council] didn't get good response so they just dropped it and I never heard the response.
>
> The city council evidently got enough of a response out of the [landowner survey] that they kind of dropped it like a hot potato.

The public was not given access to the results of the landowner survey, nor was I when I requested access from both the city and the county engineer. The explanation I received is that the results had been "lost." Nothing has come of the issue since then. Residents believe it was simply too controversial for the council to pursue, and that government was responding to community pressure.

> If we hadn't received the opposition on the location, the trail would already be in the funding stages. I firmly believe that. Because moving forward with the trail was governed strictly by the city of [Meadville] submitting a proposal to the state for funding. They could have done that with the stroke of a pin. I mean the city council could have done that regardless of the public's opinion. But naturally their job is to represent their constituents as best they can.
>
> I think [the council] just didn't want to get too involved.

Reluctant to make any kind of determination on the trail, the issue was ostensibly turned over to the people at a town meeting, absolving government from taking an official position. But why was the city government so unwilling to take a stand? Partly because the opponents were fighting on ideological grounds—that their individual rights as Meadville citizens would be trampled if the city took away their land: As one Meadville resident proclaimed, "I feel that a person has a right to own property in this country and you can't just arbitrarily take over that person's property. It's wrong." Coleman (1957) notes the influence

ideologically committed opponents can have on projects, as does Green (1961). There are striking resemblances between the qualitative study Green (1961) conducted on fluoridation and conditions observed in Meadville. Like the anti-fluoridationists, the opponents of the bike trail felt that "their autonomy and integrity as individuals [were] under severe attack" (Green, 1961:14). Faced with this threat, even opponents who felt a sense of guilt about opposing the trail knew they had to stand up for their rights.

> ...I had a lot to do with defeating it. I know sometimes I'm not proud of that, just because it would've been a good deal if it would've gone someplace else...[And sometimes] I felt a little bit of guilt about it. But it wasn't enough to change my mind.

This landowning opponent articulated the internal conflict he experienced between his individual, private interests and that of the public good in the trail controversy. At the same time, he revealed which one prevailed in both his mind and reality.

Dropping the Trail

Did the council members bow to the pressure of a few opponents? Or was the council being democratic and responsive to the needs of the constituency? Was it dropped because "everybody couldn't talk about it and go away being friendly"? Or perhaps within the social context of the community, nobody wanted to bear the social cost of splitting the community over a dispute about a bike trail. According to Ben, a few people managed to stop the project dead in its tracks on the basis of irrational arguments—yet that was the voice of reason government heard.

> I think there was a lot of community-wide involvement and a lot of people said yes, we would like to have a bike trail, but two or three said, no, I want to build a house on that...Somebody said, 'I don't know if I want the bike trail behind my house. What about perverts?!'"

But government heeded the voices of opposition partly because proponents failed to step forward to voice their support. Frustrated with proponent apathy he encountered, Ben remarked,

> Anybody that's opposing it is going to be quick to let it be known that they're opposing it. And the people that are for it, unless they are very, very strongly for it... they'll live without it if it doesn't happen. They just kind of assume that it's going to happen because maybe somebody like me is pushing hard and they think, 'Oh, that

> guy is going to carry the ball.' Well you just can't carry the ball that far sometimes. And that was my frustration with this deal. I would talk to people [who said it would be great] 'then write a letter to the council, express your opinion!' 'Oh, we'll do that, we'll do that.' Well, I read every one of them, so I know who has and who hasn't.

As Oliver (1984) notes, there is often serious tension between community leaders and their communities. Active contributors to community affairs tend to "have less respect and liking for their neighbors and more of a belief that if they want something done they will have to do it themselves" (Oliver, 1984:609). Ben's attitude is a clear indication supporting this claim. He learned the hard way that information is fraught with both risk and power in a close-knit community where if one person finds out one's (controversial) position, it is possible that the entire community could find out if sensitive information is leaked. Yet this did not deter him. But for others, a solution becomes taking no public stance at all, thereby reducing the risk of exacting any social cost for choosing sides. This is not so unusual. As Halstead, Luloff, and Myers describe it,

> the transactions costs...to those who benefit from [a] facility outweigh the benefits they would gain from successful siting, while for NIMBYists the benefits (in terms of avoided costs) of halting the siting outweigh their own transactions costs of demonstration, litigation, etc. (1993:100)

At the cost of splitting the community and facing legal battles, the city council dropped the project. "There have been at least three people that would say you will have a court battle if you go through their property. So you start looking at alternatives rather than do that because that's where you make enemies and then it just lasts forever." In a community where social relationships are close-knit, politics are personalized and controversy avoided at almost all costs. The process of doing nothing is indeed a decision to do something. In controversial situations, community leaders in close-knit communities are faced with constraints such as cross-pressures and sometimes conflicting allegiances due to the multiplexity of their relationships (Coleman, 1966; Boissevain, 1974). The emergence of new oppositional leaders who are generally not active in community projects (thus free from the influence of community norms and internal cross-pressures) can, as a result of their *lack* of ties, succeed in achieving goals of the private good. Government officials who are tied closely to the community either through their position as residents or as elected

representatives are not so free to choose, nor are the very active volunteers—typically project supporters—in a controversial situation. It is a conscious decision to limit the social cost to the individual at the expense of foregoing something a bit more expendable—the public good—that prevented the public commitment of supporters.

The Importance of Historical Precedence

In his monograph on community controversy, Coleman (1957) links the decisions of today with the decisions of tomorrow: "Community disputes are turning points at which application of a small amount of knowledge and effort can have a total effect far beyond its immediate consequences" (2). Indeed, it is the negotiated and ever-evolving social context in which community decisions are made that have a substantial influence on the way community disputes are handled. Present, even future generations, may turn to past generations for guidance.

The bike trail issue is a perfect example. As might be recalled from the newspaper accounts, the local Methodist Church was negotiating with a private landowner in winter of 1998 to purchase property for a new parsonage. As a result of legal issues in the pending sale, the seller was forced to approach the city (the legal owner) since the seller technically could not sell that land as long as they had no title.

In city council meeting minutes printed in the Meadville newspaper, the private landowner claimed to have paid $500 to the railroad in 1979 for a quit claim deed. The landowner then proceeded to build a shed and driveway on the property. However, the current (1998) city council established that the railroad did not own the land to sell since the city owned the property and had given the railroad use of it with the provision they would return it if (when) the railroad ever left. At that point, the city was considering the practical needs for the proposed bike trail and realized that disposal of the property would divert the goals of the trail.

Recall, still, that three weeks later, the council withdrew their decision when new information surfaced. Some digging through old records yielded city council meeting minutes that provided new reasons for the current city council to grant a title transfer to the

seller. According to records from a 1978 city council meeting, the city decided to transfer the land to the Cotton family but did not follow legal channels, and did not do the proper paperwork as a follow-up. According to the present city attorney, the 1978 council knew that the landowner was "taking the land and would help a case seeking clear title."

At this point in the negotiations (in 1998), the issue was not yet settled. Historical precedence alone did not constitute the only reason for the council to rescind its original vote. The newspaper recorded further negotiations as part of the final decision of the council. The attorney for the landowner offered to contact the buyer (the Church) to request a letter of consent of sorts, to see if they would provide the city with confirmation that they would "allow the trail at some point in the future if it becomes a reality." One city council member who voted in favor of retaining city rights to potential trail routes conceded during the meeting in a conciliatory move that he had heard from the "Methodists" (presumably those on the search committee) that the trail "might not be a problem through the area." In this way, consent was granted through informal means which played, not insignificantly, a role in the decision-making process in the early stages of the trail proposal.

The institutional form of government in Meadville is one based on trust; from it springs a system of informal governance. This type of structure, along with community size, allows for constant monitoring and consultation which routinizes contact (Powell, 1996) as well as normative expectations. This "trust-based form of governance" does not observe formal policy dictates, but follows local customs and methods of decision-making that are negotiated through everyday contact. "In the process, common purposes, shared interests, and reputation become entangled with friendship, past experience, and future incentives..." (Powell, 1996:63).

As indicated above, the social context based on the prevalent normative values and behaviors that characterize interaction within the community field influences the pattern of community responsiveness to controversial issues. In Meadville, the social context is predicated on informal means of governance through verbal agreements, which depend heavily on norms of trust and close ties bred out of familiarity. Those norms are tightly woven into the institutional structure of decision-making in Meadville. While legal issues are

a consideration in community proceedings, those issues are decided within the context of precedence and prevailing community norms.

An informal, normative system of trust and concession was viewed as an acceptable replacement for formal, institutional commitment. And because of the nature of the controversy, when later assurances by the Methodist Church failed to materialize when their legal interests were protected, nobody stepped forward to request cooperation. Possibly, the Church never did make such concessions and the councilman proposing it was either mistaken, fabricated the story, or merely holding out hope that this might be the case in an attempt to diffuse the conflict.

The city council's decision in 1978 to hand over city land to an adjacent landowner, along with the primacy of informal assurances, became a blueprint for decision-making in Meadville. As Coleman (1957) contends, each community has to take its own approach to controversy, and since controversy "arising out of a particular kind of crisis is not likely to occur frequently in a community, each community has little opportunity to evolve" (2). This is especially true when communities develop an ineptitude for even addressing controversy when it does occur. As a result, the community, by avoiding controversy and issues of a confrontational nature, learns little from the present, relying instead on using the past as a fallback. Historical precedence becomes integrated into the community through standards of administrative response.

A Model of Administrative Response

After conducting considerable research on fluoridation, Sanders (1961) presented a model of the different stages of community controversy, starting with issue initiation that marches through a progression of processes including pre-proposal, proposal, community action, decision, and aftermath. At the initiation stage, an idea is discussed among one's friends and colleagues where the initiator is seeking primary (not necessarily formal) group support (Sanders, 1961). For the bike trail, this would likely include Ben's suggestion of the trail to his friends, co-workers, and perhaps the historic preservation board members. At the pre-proposal stage, contact is made beyond the primary group to secondary ones. For the

trail, this would include city officials and those with a vested interest in the project to help formulate a plan of action (Sanders, 1961). It is at this point that a "pro" side emerges. Yet the lack of clear formulation of a plan makes it difficult for the developing "anti" side to articulate any real opposition to the plan until the proposal stage. The formal move for legitimization occurs in the proposal stage, usually involving a town or city council that requires a "favorable vote of the electorate as the legitimizing act" that becomes a call for action (Sanders, 1961:59). In Meadville, the council's initial vote to support the trail hailed the end of the proposal stage and beginning of the community action stage.

This fourth level develops when groups and individuals make a point to take a stand which is considered by the legitimizing body. In the case of Meadville, this process of consideration was characterized by a campaign of information gathering including personal phone calls, a public hearing, and the distribution of opinion surveys. Once the legitimizing body felt they had an accurate representation of the public's position, the council had four options according to Sanders (1961): proposal postponement, rejection, amendment, or adoption. In Meadville, they incorporated a combination of three alternatives by postponing the project under the guise of collecting more information (sending out surveys after the hearing), then trying to amend it (proposing to widen the sidewalk instead), and finally by following a course of inaction (a tacit agreement to reject the proposal). In the final stage (the aftermath), the losing side (the bike trail proponents) may not accept the issue as settled. Partisanship that emerges during the issue may be transferred to other realms of social life (Sanders, 1961).

Based on the historical record and analysis of Meadville's administrative response to the controversial bike trail, the following general model (Figure 2) is proposed to predict the administration's response to issues of future controversial content:

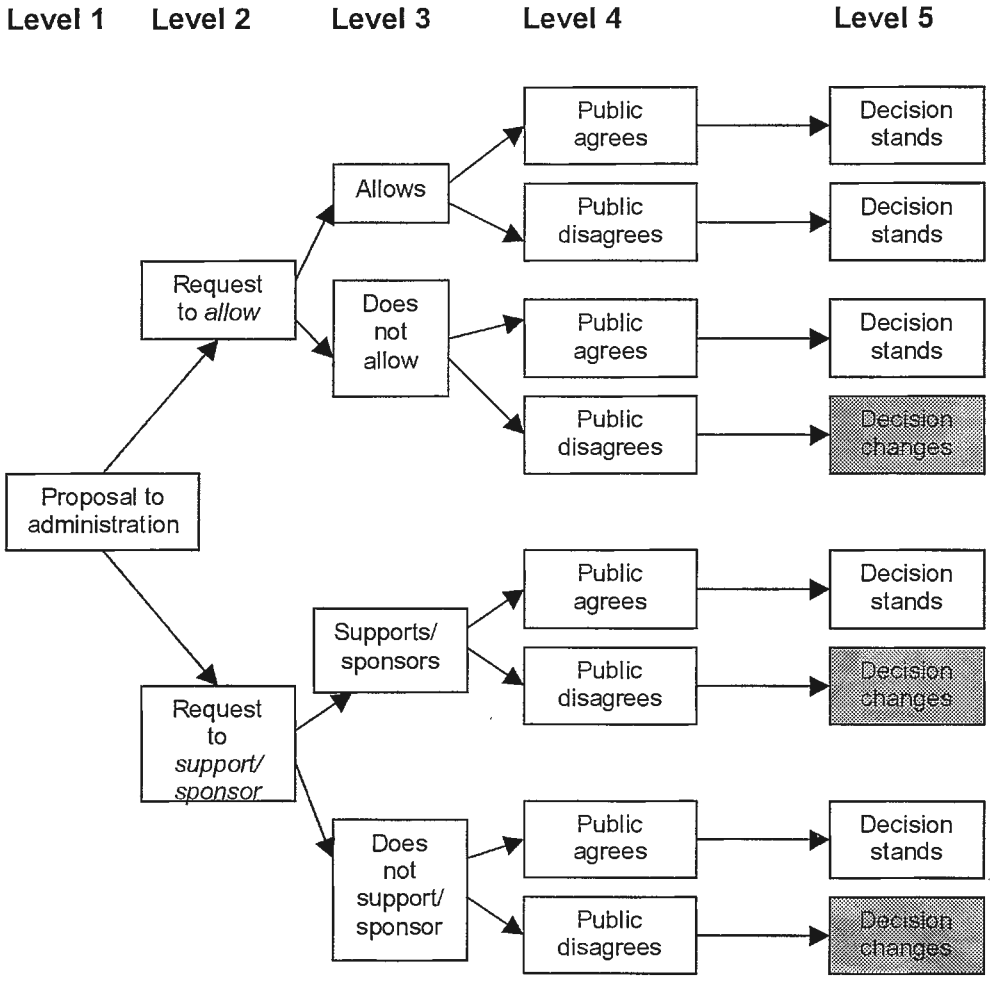


Figure 2. Model of Administrative Decision-Making in Meadville

1) The administration is approached by a group/individual with an idea/informal proposal.

2) The administration is requested to either allow or support/sponsor the proposal.

3) The administration informally gauges (through informal channels of chats and phone calls) the public response and decides whether to *allow* or *support/sponsor* the proposal. If it cannot get a feel for the public sentiment, it may choose to appoint a

committee to investigate the matter further. If it chooses to vote, a report of the vote is carried in the local paper and becomes public information.

4) The public has time to react to the council's decision. The city administration listens to the informal public reaction to their decision to allow a project via informal (interpersonal) and formal (professional) networks. This level provides the most anxiety for the administration since it is their responsibility to act on public sentiment. Determining what and who constitutes public sentiment is usually a very muddy issue.

5a) *Allowing:* If the public response to allowing a proposal is either positive or negative (that is, if any individual or group objects strongly), the administrative decision stands. The reason the decision stands when the administration allows a proposal despite a negative public reaction is because the administration is not politically responsible for the proposal. The proposing group is responsible and the burden shifts to them. If the administration does not allow a proposal to which the public is amenable (which will probably never be the case), the administration has nothing to lose and will change its original decision. Naturally, if the administration does not allow a proposal and the public agrees, the decision stands.

5b) *Supporting/sponsoring:* Requests to *support* or *sponsor* a proposal merits quite different attention from the administration than merely allowing some other individual or organization to carry out a goal/project. The difference lies in political responsibility. If the public reaction agrees with the administration that the proposal should be supported, the issue forges ahead. However, if the public reaction to the administration's support of an issue is negative, the administration will succumb to community pressure and reverse its original decision because as sponsors, it is politically responsible for the project. If the administration chooses not to support a project and the public agrees, the decision will stand. If the public disagrees with the administration not to support a project (again unlikely), it will change its original decision.

In level 5, it should be noted that prior to the administration making any changes to its original decision, public opinion may be solicited either at the next administrative meeting or a public hearing. After administrative discussion and usually a *considerable length of time* lapses in which the issue fails to resolve itself, the administration may revote depending on whether the administration is being asked to allow or support/sponsor the proposal. If only requested to allow a proposal where another individual/organization does the legwork, the administration may not necessarily vote in such a way as to pacify public objections. They know that public pressure will be transferred to the sponsoring organization. However, if asked to publicly support or sponsor the project, the administration will more carefully weigh objections. At that point, they may rescind their original vote and choose not to revote if they cannot confidently assess the public's support for the proposal. Or they may revote, the outcome of which is more likely to be different than the first one. Such outcomes of compromise appear based on a political will to preserve personal relationships in the community.

VII. BEYOND GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

While the administration is attempting to mitigate the tension among their constituency, so are its citizens. Their approach involves aligning their respective positions with the good of the community. The influence of the norm for the collective good was thus used in very different ways and is revealed in the rhetoric employed by each side and the information exchanged about each side. Whether each side honestly believed they were acting in the best interest of the community, or whether they were simply using the argument to justify their actions to protect their interests is debatable. Maybe the strategies employed by each side simply indicate that "some of our deepest cultural conflicts arise from differing understandings of our common individualism" (Bellah et al., 1985:155). Nonetheless, both sides were arguing for opposite outcomes of the project using the same arguments.

Citizens and Trail Rhetoric

Trail opposition strategies are well-known in the literature and follow patterns exhibited by many other opposition movements against recreational trail initiatives. The case of Meadville is no different.

> Many opponents of corridor conservation are motivated by fear that a publicly used rail corridor will be a bad neighbor. They specifically are concerned about increased crime, trash, and additional costs to them (e.g., depressed property value, increased fence maintenance, greater needs for weed control). Although the fears are not borne out by the evidence, they are frequently honestly held and should be dealt with respectfully. (RTC, 1989:x)

Interviews with residents opposing the trail in Meadville bore out this claim and presented ample evidence to support it.

A national organization, the Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC), has been established to combat these fears on behalf of trail proponents in the United States. A non-profit organization, the RTC frequently publishes manuals on how to counter arguments of rail-trail opponents. They cite residents concerned with crime and vandalism; farmers who worry about the adverse affects on their crops or animals; and neighboring landowners who want to "expand their property holdings and absorb the rail route entirely" (1987:v). The RTC deems

it their mission to debunk some of the myths surrounding trail development to remove barriers. Often, opponents argue that safety will be compromised, the financial cost will be too high, and there is really no *need* for a trail.

Safety

Supporters of the trail mentioned repeatedly that safety is one of their largest concerns and reasons for supporting the trail partly because maintenance of city sidewalks has been neglected over the years.

> We have an awful lot of people who walk, and the sidewalks in town are horrible in spots, so they have to walk in the streets. Early morning and late at night it's kind of a safety hazard.

> There had been some concern over people walking in the street. I know for myself, I'd get frustrated driving down the street and there'd be people out in the street walking.

Opponents cited safety as a reason *not* to support the trail.

> I couldn't figure out how they were going to handle bikers. You know, when you're riding a bike, you don't want to stop at every block. And [the bikers] were going to cross so many streets. I don't know how it could have been safe.

But while supporters and opponents both cited physical safety as a reason for either blocking or promoting the trail idea, opponents introduced other aspects under the heading of safety and security, including crime.

> My wife did a lot of walking. I don't. It was going to be an unlighted trail. And a lot times she walks early in the morning, especially in the fall and spring when it's still dark, and I've heard others comment that they would not use it because of the security part.

If the city decided to go ahead with the project, some opponents speculated that certain technical specifications would render it unsafe so people would not even use it. In addition, opponents argued that not only would the physical safety of residents using the trail be compromised, but so would the personal welfare of those living along the trail.

> It would run through the elderly people's backyards and pass by their bedroom windows.

> I just think people didn't want it going through their backyard. This is more of a retirement city and more widowed people here. I think it's just scary to have people in the middle of the night going down the alley and talking and scaring, and it just didn't seem feasible. It would just be a place for a bunch of foul play probably.

Elderly people were considered especially vulnerable to crime that could occur on the trail at night; the thought of having it immediately outside their *bedroom* windows was especially frightening, where one expects a minimal level of privacy and safety.

Liability and insurance were also pressing safety-related issues that were considered by adjacent landowners.

> It would cross every street and [there was] concern of the insurance. I know I brought that question up because I've got grandkids that can just dart in and out of things and not look either direction and can be killed at the first whack on one of those trails when you have to cross every block and street. I was concerned what kind of insurance [the city] would carry if some child would tear across on his bike and get hit and killed.

This opponent expressed a concern for the safety of her grandchildren, as well as the city's legal responsibility for their possible deaths. She questioned whether the city had thought about the need for a more comprehensive insurance plan for something that she thought inherently unsafe in the first place. As Halstead et al. note (1993), child safety concerns seem to be the primary component of many NIMBY arguments. In their study, however, NIMBYists decried the location of solid waste management facilities based on the presence of children in the household. In contrast, those without children such as older residents were less likely to exhibit NIMBY behavior. Due to the nature of the bike trail, parents with children could be expected to support the project, and indeed they did (see Chapter VIII). Older residents were more likely to oppose it, but unexpectedly, they also justified their opposition in terms of saving the lives of their grandchildren.

As the RTC predicted, fencing, too, was brought up in the arguments against the trail. Opponents argued that a protective barrier would be necessary for protecting adjacent landowners from the expected crime that would occur along the trail as well as for liability reasons. "We would have had to have a fence put up or something for security reasons." Without a fence, what protection would they have against potential lawsuits brought on if a child were to be hurt on their property because of the trail?

In Montagne's *Preserving Abandoned Railroad Rights-of-Way for Public Use: A Legal Manual* (1989), the liability of adjoining property owners "is defined by their own actions in relation to the trail" (127). If landowners do not own any part of the trail nor do they charge for access, they have no rights or obligations unless they create a dangerous condition on the trail through willful or malicious failure by their own act or omission. In the case of easements, the property owners' obligations are nonexistent because they do not own the trail. Yet even if they do own any portion, in 46 of the 50 states, recreational use statutes warrant mention in state codes to absolve adjacent property owners of liability to encourage them to welcome recreational trails. Only in the case of willful or malicious conduct or even attracting or maintaining a nuisance can adjacent landowners be held liable. Iowa is one of the 46 states that has such recreational use statutes in place (Montagne, 1989). Iowa Code, Section 461C (Public Use of Private Lands and Water) plainly states that

> ...an owner of land owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for recreational purposes, or to give any warning of a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity on such premises...(461C.3)

Landowners can only be held liable in such cases when there is a "willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity" (Iowa Code, §461C.6).

Personal property liability concerns are also unfounded. "In most cases, rail trails are covered either under a local jurisdiction's general park and recreation insurance program, or under its street and highway insurance program" (Montagne, 1989:134). Montagne further contends that trail safety and liability issues should be less of a concern in areas where bicycles and pedestrians are competing with cars for the same space in the streets where accidents are even more likely to occur.

Cost and Needs Versus Wants

Opponents were also inclined to differentiate their arguments against the trail based on cost issues. Many questioned whether the trail was an appropriate public investment.

> The other part that I would be opposed to would be if the city can financially afford to guarantee that they are going to take care of a walking trail for 20 years and do all the

> resurfacing. I feel there's other places where they ought to make the commitment for that money other than that at this point. We're in trouble with the sewer and we're in trouble with the streets as far as I'm concerned.

Some opponents, many in fact, felt that public funds would be better spent on more basic needs rather than risky luxuries like the bike trail. In contrast, proponents regarded the trail as a public need remarking that "the very first formal indicator was when we did our community needs assessment a couple of years ago." Moreover, Ben noted the need for the trail by the 75 or so people who use the school for recreational purposes but whose hours are restricted when school is in session.

Opponents regarded the trail not as a need, but a want. And it was a public want they did not support. No guarantees would change their mind that the project would end up costing the city more than they thought it was worth.

> The town informed me that the insurance wouldn't be any higher than it is right now [but] I just cannot believe that they wouldn't have to carry more insurance for something like that. There are a lot of risks in it.

Despite the city's assurances that insurance rates would not go up, this opponent remained unconvinced refusing to believe the answer they gave her. It was too risky of a venture to support—either liability-wise, cost-wise, or security-wise.

Proponents, on the other hand, thought the trail would bring money into the community rather than drain funds from the public. The trail would put the public on the receiving end of government grants and add income from tourism and development.

> There is government funding available on an 80/20 cost share for walking/recreation trails in communities. In fact, there are a couple different government funding sources.

> I think we have to do a little bit for recreation and [although] our people need recreation too, we need to do something to bring an influx of money and an influx of people.

Once again, each side employs the same basis for their arguments while promoting different outcomes.

Community

One aspect that differed in each party's framing of their viewpoint is the notion of community. Community as an idyllic, united coalition of residents in harmony with each other was not a concept opponents referred to, but frequently was one mentioned by proponents.

> [I supported the trail] because it was an idea and a goal that was set by the preservation group and it's there and it makes sense. I like to walk too. And I've seen some that are really beautifully done and once they are done, people in the community are proud of them and I think that would be something that our community would be proud of and would get [to] use. And recreation is...important. I like these kinds of things. They make me feel good.

This resident explained his support in terms of the collective and the individual. It was a goal set by the preservation group that would serve to build community pride around a positive aspect of Meadville. The trail would become a symbol uniting residents together. This resident also emphasized that the trail was a group goal, a public goal that just "makes sense"—it is right and good and moral. He also admitted a personal interest in the issue since he would be a user. In contrast, no opponents mentioned they were personally interested in using the trail but a few mentioned some of their family members might.

Supporters pointed out the groups of people they thought the trail might benefit.

> The bike trail could help people in the hospital to come out of the hospital, it could help the older people walk, and the kids could have somewhere to ride their bikes besides the streets. It would just be a good all around for the community.

> It would be a real benefit for our physically and mentally challenged population at the group home.

In a much different strategy, supporters chose a rhetorical style that framed the benefits of the trail in terms of the public good, whereas the opponents framed their opposition in terms of its consequences and the public bad. Each used similar arguments but in different ways. Both could certainly have been motivated for personal reasons, such as the private benefit for proponents who exercise. Yet each chose to present their argument publicly in terms of the public service they were doing by taking their respective positions. This can be attributed to the strong norm of the collective that prevails in the community.

Each side was wary of the public pressure taking sides bestowed upon them and in order to soften the reception of their arguments, both sides operated under the umbrella of the community norm that suggests residents of Meadville act on behalf of the community rather than themselves. Neither side was interested in coming across as having an individual interest in the outcome. Both sides were to some degree subject to the collective constraints exerted by high social capital in the community. The rhetoric employed by supporters focused on the good it would do groups to which they did not necessarily belong, such as the elderly or mentally challenged. Proponents also argued for the economic benefit of beefing up the economy with government or tourist dollars.

Opponents, on the other hand, put their opposition in terms of the public good they were doing by opposing the trail. They found ways to do this by implying they were actually doing the public a favor by opposing a trail that would cause major, if not deadly accidents; would empty city coffers for insurance money, fencing, and maintenance; and expose property owners and local police forces to the "foul play" that was sure to accompany construction of the trail. The mere presence of these arguments and how each side viewed their position as benefiting the public of Meadville suggests that the norm of maintaining the collective good, or at least appearing to, continues to influence behavior in the community, and is part of an important social context that shapes public discourse regarding controversial issues.

Smoothing Out Differences

With each side both arguing for the same public good, how did they regard arguments made by the other side? Anger, in combination with distrust, emerged among feelings of some trail proponents: "If [people] are opposed, it's for personal or private reasons, and they are going to give you all kinds of excuses and lies as to why they are opposed to it..." Yet despite this accusation, there is overwhelming evidence that many proponents in the community downplayed the divisions by softening the edges that accompanied the bike trail controversy. Proponents did not dismiss arguments of the

opponents. In fact, the interviews revealed they had considered arguments of the opposition for which they expressed respect.

> Location was the biggest source of the division...Some individuals did not want it in their backyard, is essentially the way they looked at it. Personally, I don't see a lot of difference between making a weed patch in your backyard into a nice landscaped recreation trail versus having the same thing [in the form of] the sidewalk up front. But you have to respect those peoples' opinions. Maybe if I was sitting on that location, I would feel the way they do—who knows?

But respect does not necessarily mean acceptance. In some instances, the dense network of ties brought mothers and sons to opposite sides of the fence, bringing the disagreement literally closer to home.

> I visited with my mother about it and she said she wasn't sure whether she would want a walking trail going across her backyard. But she usually supports community ventures like that and I was a little surprised. In fact, I really didn't like her response, but I have to respect that because it would be her backyard.

Empathy for opponents' arguments stems from a mutual respect for commonly held values. Every resident in Meadville has the right to own property and such rights should not be revoked. The concerns of the opponents were therefore legitimized in the eyes of the proponents partly because they were neighbors and mothers, but also because the opponents were citizens entitled to the same rights that we expect to be protected by government—those of individual property rights. Common values also helped proponents justify other arguments opponents made as well.

> [The opponents] thought the trail needed a wall. Kids could fall off of it. But [one opponent] didn't like the idea of having a wall in his backyard. I couldn't blame him after I drove by...

Opponents, too, were also willing to consider arguments made by the proponents.

> The idea wasn't all bad—don't think that—and I think it would be a nice asset. The school would use it a lot because the track boys run from the school to the hospital. I can see where it would be good and I can see where it would be a detriment.

One proponent, "Hans," was on the historic preservation team and was the only one to make a real attempt at bridging the differences. He went so far as to actually talk to landowners adjacent to the proposed route about the issue. But his involvement as a token member (Oliver, 1984) could not guarantee he could win over any converts. His role, formally

limited to serving on the historic preservation board, meant he was unable to make decisions at the city council level and could make no guarantees on how specifics would be handled. Thus, his attempts to approach opponents on behalf of the proponents were futile. Such gestures should have been forthcoming from the actual decision-makers in the community—namely the resident "planners" and local government officials. Hans described his attempts to calm the fears of landowning opponents and his own ineffectiveness at doing so.

> [The opponents] weren't against it—they were looking for more information. The one on [one end] saw where it could be remedied real easily on his end and he wanted the bike trail. He just wanted to make sure it got remedied before it was built. I suggested [a solution] to another man that would [benefit both him and the trail] and that shook the devil out of him. But that wasn't the way it was [officially] planned. The [third] one wouldn't talk. He didn't want his property cut. I said, 'Why don't we put it [between properties instead of through] ... but he knew I wasn't in any position to guarantee such a thing...I can't say that I don't blame him.

Hans was convinced that with more effective planning and perhaps negotiating with the people who actually had the authority to make promises, the trail could have been a success. He optimistically thought that trail placement and flexibility in the planning process were necessary elements in helping to address landowners' concerns. "These were things I thought we could sit down and resolve."

The will for a feasible solution was there—the mechanism for achieving it, however, was not. The only proponent that even tried to talk to the opposing side and seemed to be trusted to some degree by everyone was not in a position to make promises. This meant that he could only relay information and provide empty assurances that were no substitute for administrative guarantees opponents wanted to hear. Informal, word-of-mouth assurances were simply not enough to appease opponents who did not *trust* that their concerns would be appropriately addressed by the community if they consented.

The fact that some proponents felt a degree of guilt in disregarding individual property rights of fellow Meadville residents silently undermined the efforts of the pro-trail side. A desire to keep community peace also meant they lacked a certain commitment—one that was necessary in bringing such a difficult project to fruition. In addition, knowing they were compromising their networks of support in the form of family and friends by

promoting the project created a kernel of self-doubt that made it easy to back down, effectively removing the threat their actions seemed to pose to community cohesion.

The Information Gap

Qualitative evidence indicates communication did not ever really transcend differences. Interviews with people on both sides of the bike trail issue revealed that communication across groups, with one already-noted exception, generally did not occur. The structure of the conflict was such that a feeble attempt was made in the form of government mediation, but even government was a stakeholder and proved to be ineffective. Instead of direct communication between opposing sides, those for and those against the trail interacted with the city council or county board of supervisors. The administration served a designated role in relaying information to the other side either privately through individual telephone calls or publicly through meeting proceedings. In only one case was there ever an opportunity for opponents and proponents to face each other and actively debate. But the public meeting each side attended was used merely as a platform to present their views, revealing the propensity for allowing differences of opinion but not open discussion. Unfortunately, the close-knit social structure was not conducive to effectively dealing with differences of opinion in a public forum.

Aside from the duty of public officials to gather diverse opinions, those not holding leadership positions relied on obtaining information about the trail in limited circles, usually circles that reflected their own views. This strategy of information gathering was supplemented by official proceedings printed in the newspaper. But as Coleman (1957) notes, newspapers as a form of mass media cannot legitimately transmit derogatory information. This meant residents had to rely on friends and neighbors for the type of information they were seeking.

Vidich and Bensman discuss the presence and role of gossip in small towns. In the town of Springdale, population 1000, although there always appears to be a veneer of neighborliness, "gossip exists as a separate and hidden layer of community life" (1968:42) that is appropriately shared only among small circles. In Springdale, only the positive aspects

of community are publicized openly while negativity is confined to the Monday morning coffee klatch or words exchanged among the closest of friends.

> The etiquette of gossip which makes possible the public suppression of the negative and competitive aspects of life has its counterpart in the etiquette of public conversation which always emphasizes the positive. There are thus two channels of communication that serve quite different purposes. (Vidich and Bensman, 1968:44).

When community failures inevitably occur, "one senses what is almost a communal conspiracy against any further public mention of it" (1968:45).

One problem in Meadville may have been the circulation of too much gossip—too much informal information spread through rumors. As one resident said, "There was a lot of information out there, but whether or not [it] was actually true or not..." People consulting backporch sources of information gained a narrow, sensationalized interpretation of the issue and may have felt left out of the loop through more formal channels that generated more facts. In turn, feelings of hostility and exclusion became formidable elements in the controversy, providing social obstacles to an otherwise well-intended community development idea. The following evidence provides a description that helps explain the rise and role of the rumor mill in the dissemination of incorrect information, and the logical development of resentment that began to develop during the project.

Communication and Conflict Avoidance

Residents were apparently misinformed not because the proper channels for accurate information were considered lacking ("I think there's been opportunities for [the open exchange of information]; I don't know if everyone's taken advantage of it") but because they feared pursuing those channels for obtaining information, the direct result of a community tradition for avoiding conflict and personalizing politics. Residents were simply too reluctant to engage in conversation with someone who held an opposite viewpoint on the trail because of the potential consequences that they might not be able to walk a line of civility with each other.

> The opposers and the people for it have not clashed or anything, so it's not that there has been a public debate with people really trying to define where they are. It was more everybody couldn't talk about it and [still] go away being friendly.

And as one resident observed, "Nothing would be resolved without a little open conversation." In fact, open conversation did not occur, not even at the public presentation held in January. There, each side presented its argument either for or against, but an open dialogue was not forthcoming. "The new county engineer was very good at the meeting. He had [people] present opposing views." Presenting opposing views, however, does not mean constructive debate. Even with this public opportunity, Meadville's residents were not willing to engage in "a little open conversation." This phenomenon mirrors what Salamon, Farnsworth, and Rendziak found in Virden, Illinois, a small farming town with "strong" social capital faced with addressing the threat of water contamination from agricultural run-off (1998). Although they do not elaborate, the researchers state that "serious community dialogue about how to reduce atrazine in the public water supply is absent in Virden" (1998:222). The ability in Virden to cooperate and accept the actions of a local planning committee is chalked up to local trust in government officials, farmers, and a faith in local reporting of the danger, resulting in the minimization of perceived community health risks. Yet they also cite the role of social risks in striving for what they term a cooperative solution.

> As a consequence of the density of acquaintanceship in Virden, people think that dramatic solutions to the atrazine problem could produce conflict between farmers and townspeople... The planning committee's solutions and procedures met Virden's implicit goal of protecting the community by avoiding confrontation and divisiveness. (1998:228-229)

The collective in Meadville does not distinguish between issues and people. Like Virden, residents of Meadville expect conflict to arise out of conversations with people holding contrary viewpoints. In the process of avoiding controversy, communication networks remained stunted and the issue was never debated. While a few people were publicly willing to state their opinion at the public meeting, the structure did not subject those opinions to review or negotiation. Informal discussions and gossip almost certainly deconstructed arguments of the other side, but not under conditions where public decisions could be formally made or the accuracy of statements could be challenged. As a result, fragments of information and misinformation were conveyed among individuals, either in

opposition or support. Such an unorchestrated approach to the issue within an informally oriented social structure was inadequate when addressing public problems requiring a collective solution. A supporter for the trail project captured the fractured nature of the communication process:

> I think that it would have been great had the community organizations and groups shared how much they wanted [the trail]. Instead of groups sharing how much they wanted it, it's been more the individual sharing how much they want it.

The community collective had failed to become more than the sum of its parts. And that fragile assembly of individuals holding it all together could not withstand the few stones thrown in its direction from the voices of opposition.

Misinformed and Excluded

When residents were questioned on which individuals and organizations initiated the bike trail project, few correctly credited the historic preservation group. Moreover, the engineer could only identify who brought it to his attention, not who initiated it. Nevertheless, people just did not seem to know the answer to that question.

> Engineer: It came to my attention through the people in the city and the school. They asked me to look into different routes.

> Council member: [It] became a community issue by the county engineer. He did some research and there are some grants available. He came to the city council with the proposed route.

> Resident: I think it started out with the county engineer making up this trail through town and then the council called a town meeting... I don't know whose idea it was. I think the school wanted this trail real bad, and I think that they were big instruments in promoting it. I don't know who went through the council. I don't know if someone went through the council or if it was just an idea they had.

Even though the community is small and one might assume that the density of networks in the community would lend itself well to the speedy and accurate relaying of information, perhaps the former could be true, but certainly not the latter.

As part of conflict avoidance techniques, residents choose to rely on conversations with like-minded friends to update them on the issue. Said one opponent: "The ones I talked to were not in favor of it." Since the newspaper's role is simply to "present the facts," public

perceptions on the collective response to controversy is largely shaped by information passed through informal networks the reliability of which was not determined by this research (with a few serendipitous exceptions). But the information conveyed through such networks is not subject to quality control. Comments like, "It's a small town. 'Don't tell them I said that' that's what they say in the coffee shops" indicate that information passed among friends is not public—to share it would be to betray one's trust and introduce consequences. Residents do not want any trouble and tend toward contact with others who share their views.

> Proponent: Those with whom I've visited have been supportive. But I have visited with some of the folks along the path and with those, it was more of a tense meeting.

Information passed on through a filter of friends, family, and neighbors can further reinforce interpretations with which they are already familiar, creating a real communication gap between opposing sides. Granovetter (1973) attributes the recycling of old information to consequence of strong ties.

Lack of accurate information is related to the relative lack of public involvement in the trail. Lack of involvement can be explained by its controversial nature. When project participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (none) to 10 (total) the amount of community wide involvement existing with the bike trail, project proponents provided a mean of 6.0, almost the same as the mean opponents rated as 6.2. Note that of the seven issues selected for study in Meadville, three were controversial. All three occupied the lowest slots for the amount of community wide involvement as rated by Meadville residents. The bike trail ranked at the top of the three controversies, or fifth overall. As such, opposite sides would not meet together at a bargaining table but chose instead to lay that responsibility in the hands of local government, a role it grudgingly accepted. Supporters, although they had every reason to try to communicate with the opponents, did not try to bridge the gap and establish lines of communication with the opponents. Instead, Ben, the primary project supporter, said he purposely avoided direct contact with the other side,

> [By paying attention to negativity] you're just going to make it worse—they're going to dig in deeper if you go to them and try to convince them... So the best thing that we can do is...just to leave the negative ones alone, just leave them alone completely... so that's why I don't go to the opposing camp. And that's why I don't call on them.

Perhaps this explains his failure to play a role at the public meeting. The philosophy he abided by did not include exposing himself to negativity that opponents would surely unleash on him if he were to initiate a conversation with them about the trail.

On the other hand, this approach meant some opponents felt uninformed and that it was the obligation of the proponents to let them know what was going on. Their impression was that the proponents already had local government on their side since the administration had taken up the cause and were soliciting reasons why they should *not* pursue it. According to one opponent, adjacent landowners would not have a say in the matter. Their view of the public meeting was that it already had been decided, and they were not part of the decision-making process.

> All we were getting from the paper was that there was going to be a bike trail through the town. And they hired this engineer to do all of this work which was probably several thousand dollars [drawn from public funds], but the public didn't know anything. They had the public meeting to tell us what the engineer had decided and where it was going to be.

The process through which opponents felt they were (not) informed aroused suspicion and objections. Opponents did not feel it was their responsibility to initiate contact with supporters and so they waited for the proponents to contact them. When that failed to happen, it subsequently gave rise to hostility for the project and those working toward its implementation.

However, some quantitative evidence seems to contradict this contention. Project participants were asked to rate the extent they thought "all information about the trail was openly exchanged among Meadville residents and groups" where "1" was very restricted exchange and "10" was completely open exchange. Interestingly, of the five opponents who responded, the mean was 8.6, a somewhat higher score than the mean of 8.1 rated by 11 proponents.

Why the difference between the numerical scores and content of the open-ended interview? While the question does not distinguish between formal and informal sources of information specifically, could it be that opponents perceived a difference between the information they received from Meadville groups through formal channels and information

they received through residents via informal channels? While both groups said most discussion about the trail was both informal and formal (58% of proponents said it was both as did 60% of opponents), one does not know the source from which project opponents obtained their information about the trail. It is possible that opponents relied more heavily on informal channels because the formal ones were not providing them with everything they wanted to know. This is because they fell outside many of the community networks (see Chapter VIII). Perhaps they recognized that while they were not included in the public discussions, nevertheless, the board of supervisors was at least working with them informally to exchange ideas and gather their input.

Regardless of the supervisors' efforts, the goal of opponents became to simply stop the project dead in its tracks, rather than to suggest creative solutions and corrective measures. Had there been an open, *public* dialogue and had they been contacted fairly early in the process during planning stages, it is possible that the opponents might have felt pressure to help proponents find solutions. The community had the stock of social capital to do this, but event characteristics and some of the downsides of high social capital stood in the way.

Hostility and Condemnation

The combination of misinformation, gossip, and the failure to communicate across groups contributed to a rise of hostile feelings on both sides. With the opponents feeling somewhat excluded, their mission became singular—to stop the project. According to them, proponents were not interested in cooperation for a workable solution. Interpreting fear for indifference, the opponents lashed out at trail proponents.

> So I said [to the engineer], 'By the way, I own part of that down there where it's *just* a field, and I want to tell you it's not *just* a field, it's a hay field and a cow pasture. It's more than you think it is and I said, 'How are you going to control my cows off of your trail?' [The county engineer] said he didn't know there were any cows even in there. I said there always is. So, I said I suppose if you want it, you're just going to condemn it too!

Talk of dragging fellow residents to court indicated the gravity of the situation when the negotiation process deteriorated in the community. Probably in response to the mayor's

threatened use of eminent domain, opponents issued their own ultimatums if the community decided to give the go-ahead on the bike trail.

> Nothing has been resolved. As a matter of fact, there have been at least three people that would say you will have a court battle if you go through their property.

If the issue did not already divide the community, it certainly was on its way if one side did not compromise.

Local norms were failing to work as a method of conflict resolution. The existing apparatus for conflict resolution was either not available or not effective (Aubert, 1963) in Meadville. The mayor, upon making this discovery, then sought other means by proposing a legal method of settlement, albeit one that was very unpopular and politically dangerous. However, the mayor did not comprehend that suggesting such an alternative would not lead to a reduction of tension, but rather an increase, especially because the mere suggestion violated all of the community norms that relied on an approach that incorporated informality, trust, and popular self-governance into the problem-solving process.

The stage was already set for tense moments between opposing sides, at least for those most entrenched in the issue. Ben was becoming increasingly angered at the response of the opponents who to him would not get beyond their own selfish interest to discover the public value of the proposed trail. And part of the problem was waking the proper authorities from their apathetic slumber.

> I have to get these people who are involved in helping to persuade individuals for private reasons that the public good is more important than their private concerns and that is really hard to do. A lot of people look at private needs first rather than public needs.

Preventing government from providing the channels through which selfish goals are attained is one battle Ben lost. This gave him somewhat of a bitter edge by the time he was interviewed in June, which dampened some of the enthusiasm he once had. His frustration and hostility were manifested in the indignation and disappointment he felt for a system that failed the community and failed him personally. Despite the widespread yet unenthusiastic support for the effort, the council had acted in favor of irrational arguments that claimed so-called perverts would duck up along the trail and terrorize the landowners.

> I think there was a lot of community-wide involvement and a lot of people said yes, we would like to have a bike trail, but two or three said, 'No, I want to build a house on that.' At the [public] meeting, there were opposing statements made. Somebody said, 'Well, I don't know if I want the bike trail behind my house. What about perverts?!'

Besides deconstructing the irrational arguments of the opponents, another proponent made it clear that she was not satisfied with the council's acquiescence to opponent demands. The battle was not over; she was going see to it through her position on the park board that some form of the trail would go through the community.

> Some form of it is going to happen because I'm on the park board and we have the money and we're going to spend it. It's not going to be near the level I wanted, but it may get a piece out into the park that people see, and like, and comment. And then maybe we'll get the public support.

The rebellious tone of her words reveal not only a dissatisfaction, but perhaps a deep-seated hostility that did not end along with the demise of the bike trail as a community issue. It reemerged for her as a park board issue where she would see to it that the trail succeeded.

The passing of information in a small, close-knit community can be a benefit where almost all is subject to close public scrutiny and secrets difficult to keep. However, in the case of the bike trail, it became somewhat of a detriment as the networks fostered not the exchange of accurate information, but discussion circulated in closed circles among trusted friends and acquaintances. Opponents suspected proponents of leaving them out of the loop on purpose, and proponents suspected opponents of self-interested motives that they somehow managed to justify to an impressionable government. With no communication across groups, mutual suspicions further reinforced the gossip network as a source of information, causing a breakdown in communication. By the time the public meeting took place, neither side was able to neutrally debate the facts.

VIII. BACK-TO-BACK: PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS

The bike trail project undermined the consensual approach Meadville residents usually take when addressing community development projects. Nobody claimed to object to the notion that the trail was a good idea, in principle, for the community; residents simply took issue with where it should go. During the course of the face-to-face interviews, trail participants were directly asked whether they or others supported or opposed the project. "Opposed" was usually interpreted in two ways: 1) "I/they oppose the trail project outright" or 2) "I/they do not oppose the trail project, merely its location."

Directly asking respondents whether or not they supported or opposed the trail project gave them an opportunity to qualify their answers. For the purpose of analysis, research could not take the answers of respondents at face value since most respondents said they supported the trail but opposed certain aspects. Based on the self-admission of respondents, I have defined what "opposed" means in terms of the trail project to be those who opposed parts of the project, not the project in principle.

Aside from directly asking respondents to comment on their support or opposition of the project, researchers also asked them to comment on the support or opposition of others—those they nominated as actively involved. Because of the interpretation issues with this question, I also reassigned this variable for the 18 valid bike trail participants based on responses they themselves gave in the interview (reworked according to the new definition of "opposed") rather than others' interpretation of their position on the trail.

The differences between my reassignment of this variable and responses we received from nominating respondents are examined here. A total of 6 did not match. In other words, respondents said nominees supported the project when interviews with those nominees suggested they did *not* support *certain aspects* of the project, thus qualifying them as opponents. These 6 "errant" nominations were made by 5 different respondents. These 6 nominations only involved 3 different nominees, all of whom identified themselves as opponents due to their objection to some part of the project. Yet because of the different interpretations, they were not always identified as opponents among respondents. Four

different respondents incorrectly identified a single project opponent as a supporter. This latter individual is incidentally the city council member who voted in favor of the trail because of group pressure, but admitted during his interview he was secretly personally against it.

Reasons why residents chose to either support or oppose the trail will be examined in this chapter. Can we predict who will object to trail projects in the future? If spatial concerns were the overriding factor in whether residents of Meadville chose to either object to or promote the trail, all residents living along its proposed route would therefore be expected to oppose it. Among those opponents who qualified through the snowball sampling methods used in this study, four of the six either lived or owned property along the proposed route (Figure 3). Two did not, yet they still opposed it. Furthermore, as might be recalled from the write-up in the newspaper, of the 36 property owners who were sent surveys (all of whom were not all eligible to be contacted for this research), 19 replied, with 11 opposed and 8 in favor.

Continuing with this line of reasoning, one could likewise expect that all proponents would *not* live adjacent to the route. Among the proponents interviewed, two lived within a block of the proposed route. Thus, other factors are presumably involved in whether or not residents choose to oppose the project. Regardless, one must not discount the role proximity may have played in the matter but it does not appear to be a decisive one.

Demographics

While spatial aspects to some degree may influence a resident's decision to support or oppose the bike trail project, that may not be the only influential factor. An examination of demographic characteristics shows that members of each group share certain traits.

Age, Length of Residency, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Marital Status

Table 4 compares demographic characteristics of trail proponents and opponents. Note that the number of opponents who completed a demographic questionnaire from which these data are derived is only five—one did not choose to do so, along with one proponent.

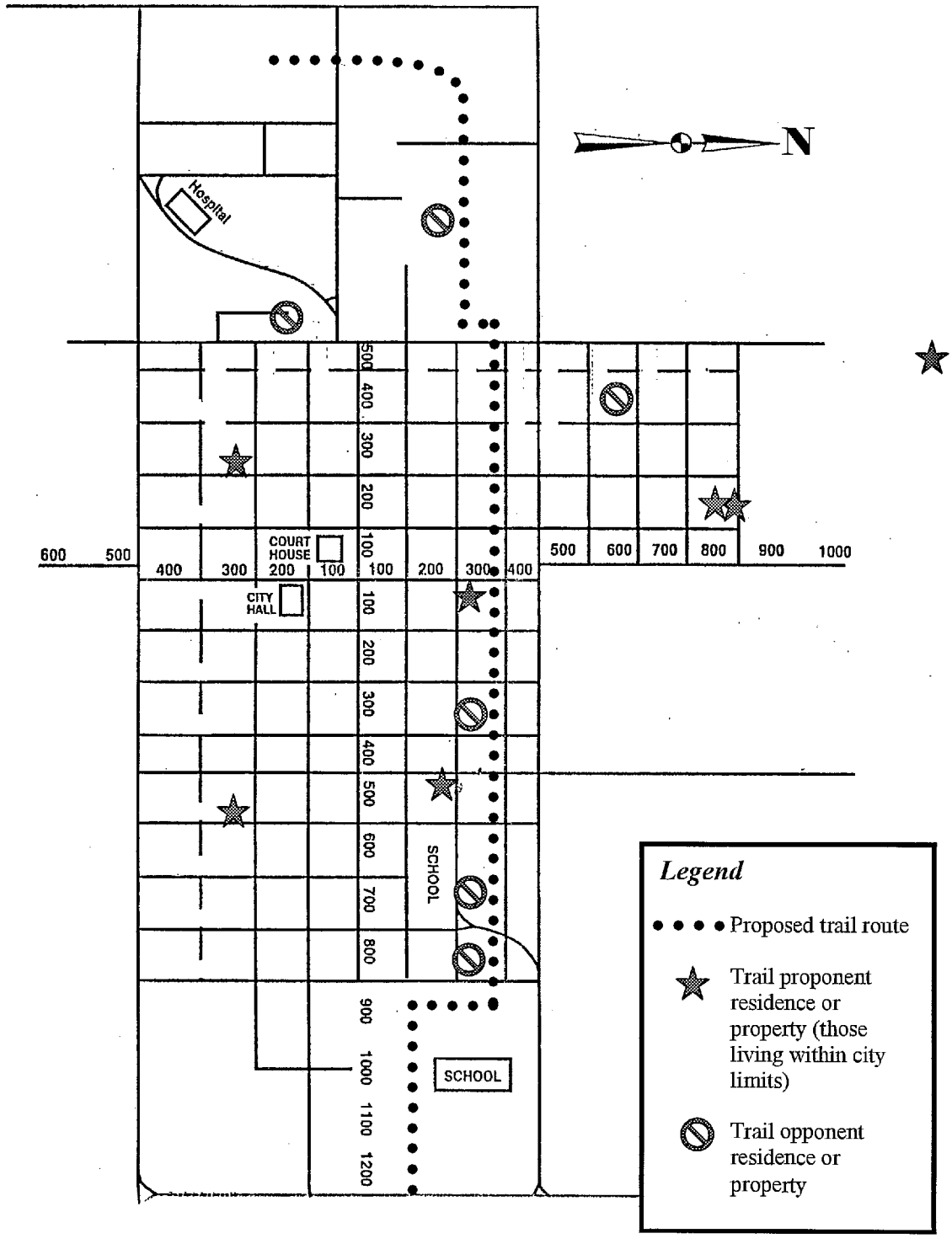


Figure 3. Map of Proponent and Opponent Residences in Meadville

Table 4. Demographic Comparison of Bike Trail Proponents and Opponents

Demographic Characteristic	Proponents (n=12)				Opponents (n=6)			
	n	*mean*	*SD*	*Percent*	*n*	*mean*	*SD*	*Percent*
Age (yrs)	11	51.5	13.2		5	63.2	7.5	
Gender	11				5			
Male				91				80
Female				9				20
Race/ethnicity	11				5			
White				100				100
Marital Status	11				5			
Married				100				100
Divorced/separated				0				0
Never married				0				0
Widowed				0				0
Highest level of formal education attained	11				5			
Less than 9th grade				0				0
9th to 12th grade				0				0
High school graduate				46				100
Some college, no degree				9				0
Associate's degree				9				0
Bachelor's degree				27				0
Graduate or professional degree				9				0
Length of residency in area (yrs)	11	37.4	20.1		5	49.2	24.7	
No. of children in household under 18	11	0.7	0.9		5	0.0	0.0	
Own or rent current residence	11				5			
Own				91				100
Rent/other arrangement				9				0
Respondent's employment status	10				5			
Employed full-time				100				60
Employed part-time				0				0
Retired				0				40
Full-time homemaker				0				0
Student				0				0
Unemployed				0				0
Spouse's employment status	10				5			
Employed full-time				80				40
Employed part-time				10				0
Retired				0				40
Full-time homemaker				10				20
Student				0				0
Unemployed				0				0
1998 gross household income	11				2			
$9,999 or less				0				0
$10,000–19,999				9				50
$20,000–29,999				9				0
$30,000–39,999				9				0
$40,000–49,999				0				0
$50,000–59,999				27				50
$60,000–74,999				18				0
$75,000 or more				27				0

In addition to the five opponent refusals to even participate in this study, one should be mindful of the limitations of these data and the resulting under-representation of the opponent group.

Proponents of the bike trail project were fairly young—the mean age was 52 years (n=11; SD=13.2). The youngest proponents were 26 and 37; the oldest were 77 and 62. In contrast, the average age of opponents (n=5) was more than 10 years older—the mean age was 63 years (ranging from 52 to 71; SD=7.5). For the most part, project opponents were also longer-term residents having lived in the community and/or the surrounding area for an average of 49 years (SD=25 years). Proponents, on the other hand, lived in the area for an average of 37 years (SD=20 years). Little difference was noted regarding gender, however, where males comprised the majority of each group with each having only one female. And as expected in this racially homogeneous region, all respondents were white. All participants were also married.

Education, Children in Household, and Employment Status

Education levels of proponents and opponents differed quite drastically. While virtually all of the opponents had formally attained no more than a high school education, over half of proponents had gone on to obtain some kind of formal postsecondary education. Four proponents (37%) had a bachelor's degree or a graduate/professional degree. No opponents had children under the age of 18 living in the household with them; in contrast, five proponents had dependent children. The average number of children for proponents was 0.7 (three households reported having two children and two households indicated one child under the age of 18).

A corollary to the age of opponents and their lack of children under the age of 18 living in the household is employment status. Two out of five opponents were retired, as were two of five opponents' spouses. Not a single proponent respondent (n=10) or spouse indicated they were retired. In fact, all proponent respondents reported they were employed full-time as were eight out of the ten spouses. Three out of five opponents reported they were employed full-time and two of their spouses were. Thus, 90% of proponents and spouses

reported they were employed full-time, in marked contrast to 50% of trail opponents and spouses.

Home Ownership and Household Income

While all trail opponents owned their current residence, one of the proponents did not instead indicating a rental arrangement. Another property-related question regarded respondents' estimated gross household income for 1998. Only two of the five opponents chose to answer this question whereas all proponents answered. This may also be evidence of their different approaches to privacy issues. It is therefore difficult to compare the groups based on the limited information provided by the two opponents. However, one claim can be made with respect to the economic situation of project proponents. According to their responses, most of them (n=8) appear to be concentrated within the upper income bracket (73% earned $50,000 or more) while only one opponent (50%) reported such earnings. According to the RDI data collected in Meadville in a random sample in 1994, only 17% of Meadville residents reported earning as much. It appears, therefore, that trail proponents represent a part of the population earning more than the average resident of Meadville.

Comparing Perceptions on the Bike Trail

Important to this study was the collection of detailed information about the nature of the project and the involvement of Meadville residents in projects they served as active contributors. Questions were designed to probe the consensual or controversial nature of each issue, and how the community in the process dealt with the evolution of the project as a public issue. How was the trail perceived among residents? Was it even considered a controversy in local circles? Did perceptions differ according to one's position on the issue?

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of responses to a question that targets whether residents perceived the trail project was consensual in the community, or brought out differing viewpoints or even opposing sides. Both proponents and opponents agreed that the issue stimulated different viewpoints in the community. More specifically, participants were asked to select from a list of three possible choices which best represented how the bike trail

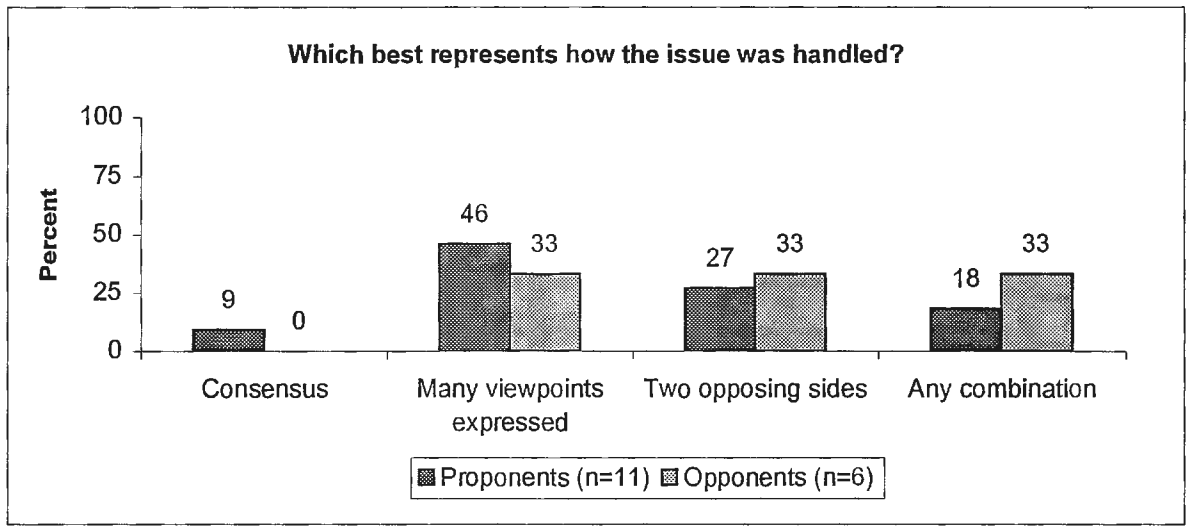


Figure 4. Which Best Represents How the Issue Was Handled?

issue was handled in the community as it concerned organizations. Because of the complex and dynamic nature of this issue, residents interpreted this question in many different ways.

> I think we had consensus from the beginning, at least the CLG [Certified Local Government—a branch of the historic preservation group] had consensus from the beginning.

This single, aberrant case that expressed there was consensus qualified his interpretation of the question narrowly in terms of the preservation group, not the broader community. Others tended to differ.

> It wasn't consensus. There are many points of view expressed, I guess. There weren't two clearly defined sides, because I think everybody kind of wants it.

Yet other residents came up with any combination of the three choices. Many seemed frustrated with the wording of the question and its inability to aptly capture the true nature of the bike trail issue across time. As one respondent asked, "Do you mean today or from the beginning?" Another separated the issue between the project and its implementation.

> There were two clearly defined sides that were in opposition. There's a consensus that there is a need for such a trail but there is no consensus on whose property it's going to cross or who's going to pay for it.

> There were many points of view expressed. When it came to actually defining the route, there were two clearly defined sides.

In the beginning, there seemed to be consensus that a trail was a good idea. Then, as the issue progressed from the pre-proposal stage to the planning stage, two clearly defined sides that were in opposition emerged. Despite the reliability problems of this question, both proponents and opponents agreed that the nature of controversy in the community could not be squeezed into separate categories. Controversy surrounding the bike trail was instead described as a malleable social phenomenon that changed over time.

For those respondents who recognized the differences of opinion ("many viewpoints expressed," "two opposing sides," or any combination involving either one), a follow-up question designed to provoke conversation about the community's problem-solving abilities was asked. Figure 5 shows the percent distribution of proponent and opponent responses indicating the presence or absence of some kind of resolution. Overall, both proponents and opponents alike said differences were not resolved.

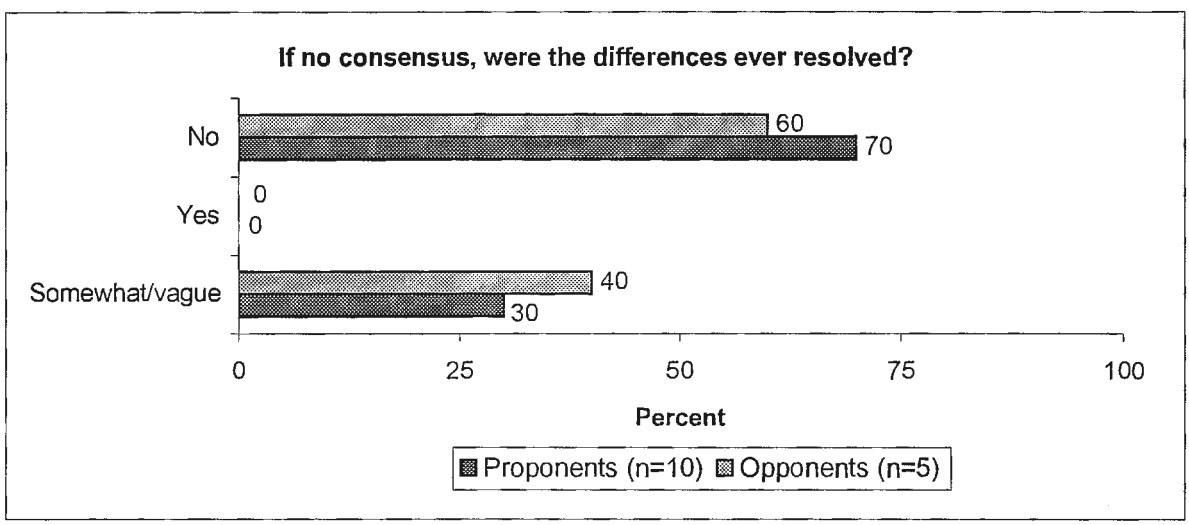


Figure 5. If There Was No Consensus, Were (any) Differences Ever Resolved?

Again, due to the varied interpretations made by residents, researchers were left to determine whether any differences had been resolved. Some respondents pointed out certain issues such as safety and recreational aspects that the community agreed were important, but otherwise noted that differences were not resolved. Such responses were assigned to the category of "somewhat/vague." And while everyone seemed to agree that the bike trail

project had been defeated, the city council had made attempts to resolve the issue by pursuing the alternative of upgrading city sidewalks. But the reception to this idea was less than enthusiastic.

> There were discussions with the private citizens who owned property along the path and that didn't seem to be working out to the satisfaction of the individuals involved. So there was a plan to completely reroute the trail and that brought some opposition also…

> There is not going to be an Oak Street hiking/biking trail. There is still a scaled down discussion of a trail but it may be replacing some sidewalk…which is kind of meaningless.

Failure to resolve the issue might suggest the seriousness of the controversy in the community, which can sometimes impact city elections and residents' recognition of permanent social divisions. All but one trail participant, both proponents and opponents alike, said the trail did not lead to any permanent divisions. Only one, a trail proponent affiliated with government, said "it kind of has." Regarding the trail's impact on city elections, all of the trail opponents said it did not have an impact. Two out of ten proponents said it did or would.

Apparently, few differences exist among trail proponents and opponents in regard to their perception of the trail as an issue of controversy in the community, one that was defeated despite some attempts at resolving it by improving the sidewalks that neither side seemed to care too much about. However, despite failed attempts to resolve it, both sides recognized the lack of impact the controversy had on the community in the form of permanent social and political divisions.

Project Roles

If project proponents and community activists could answer the age-old question of why people get involved in voluntary efforts, they would likely try to package and recreate those conditions to recruit the masses for a cause. It is usually not that simple. People get involved in different kinds of projects for many different reasons. To capture the wide range of reasons why bike trail participants might get have gotten involved, a number of questions

were asked. Information in this section was gleaned from answers to the following: 1) "Would you say your involvement in the bike trail was voluntary or was it more a matter of occupational, organizational, or other commitments that required you to become involved?" 2) "Why did you first become involved in the bike trail project?" and 3) "Please describe the various roles you played that were relevant to the bike trail project." In addition to these questions, participants were also asked who, if anyone, got them involved in the trail project, and whether they recruited anyone themselves. All of these questions were designed to assess reasons that led to their involvement, which might prove helpful in determining their overall social commitment to the project.

Involvement and Recruitment

As Table 5 shows, there is not much of a difference between proponents and opponents in their responses to the question pertaining to the presence or absence of certain commitments as a factor in their reasons to get involved with the bike trail project. Those respondents who indicated both voluntary reasons as well as other types of commitments were assigned to the group whose involvement had some degree of organizational or occupational commitments. Residents getting involved for purely voluntary reasons rather than organizational or occupational commitments are expected to be more socially committed than participants who got involved because their job or organizational affiliation *required* them to do so. It is difficult to tell based on these results which group was more committed voluntarily. However, opponents appear to have purely "voluntary" motivations for getting involved as opposed to organizational or occupational commitments.

The recruitment statistics in Table 5 differ much more. None of the opponents interviewed said they had been recruited by others to get involved in the bike trail. This may be possibly explained by a feeling of obligation due to organizational or occupational commitments, or the unavoidable involvement of their property in the issue. One should again be reminded of the substantial group of opponents who refused to be interviewed, which may skew the responses to this question. Indeed, those 5 opponents who refused to

Table 5. Type of Involvement and Recruitment

Involvement and Recruitment	Proponents (n=12)	Opponents (n=6)
Type of involvement		
Percent in each group whose involvement is purely voluntary	58%	67%
Percent in each group whose involvement had some degree of organizational or occupational commitments	42%	33%
Recruitment		
Percent in each group who were recruited by others	33%	0%
Percent in each group who recruited others	33%	17%
Total number of people interviewees say they recruited	16	8

participate in the study were mentioned among the 8 residents one opponent (17%) mentioned as people he recruited. It is therefore expected that at least some of them would have admitted to being recruited into the project, even though the 3 we spoke with that this opponents said he recruited did not say they were recruited by anyone.

Of the 4 individuals among the proponents who said they recruited others, a total of 16 names were mentioned for an average of four apiece—twice the total of the 8 residents the single opponent said he recruited, but yet half his (solitary) average. Does this mean opponents were more active recruiters? Again, it is difficult to say based on the limited number of cases comprising the opponent group. What may be important is not the total number of people recruited, but the number on each side doing the recruiting. One general point can be raised in regard to the use of recruitment techniques used by each group. More proponents than opponents both recruited and were recruited in their efforts to promote the bike trail project. One might infer that the total networks among proponents are wider than they are among opponents. In any case, recruitment efforts among proponents appear to be more diffuse than among opponents who seem to lack any kind of leadership structure. As the only 'recruiting' opponent put it,

> [My wife and I] had other people call and talk to us about it. And I guess we encouraged them to be involved. I don't know if we went out looking for people. But we had a lot of people ask for our opinion...

Degree of Involvement

While recruitment may be one indicator of a resident's commitment to a community development project, another is the degree of their involvement—namely, the roles they play in the evolution of the event. There are few differences in roles proponents say they played when compared to those mentioned by opponents. Residents were involved in the issue by talking to local government officials, others attended the public meeting or wrote letters, and still others simply discussed the issues with other community members. Most opponents said their role was limited to "making a fuss" and letting their position be known publicly when asked what role they played:

> Nothing, other than the fact that I made my fuss [about] the land.
>
> Just opposition…we openly expressed ourselves to a group at the meeting.
>
> When the board of supervisors called me, I told them what I thought. But other than that…

Proponents, instead of talking the project down, talked it up and wrote letters to the council expressing their support.

> I've shared information with the [engineer]…and wrote a letter to the city council members and the board of supervisors…
>
> I just talked up the positive side of it, explaining to individuals the true facts.
>
> [I worked] mostly behind the scenes…speaking to the man at the west end that was opposed, and the man at the east end that was opposed, and the man in the middle that was opposed.

In fact, aside from the county engineer who played an instrumental role in the planning, developing, and presentation of the proposal, most involvement centered around the expression of views. Part of the strategy of proponents was to make their support known publicly to counter the criticism opponents were voicing on the trail. The leader of the proponents also explained his role in terms of promotion, and found himself trying to maintain public interest in the issue by holding government officials to task by becoming a nagging, public conscience.

> [I am] just a promoter. I don't know. Active promoter...I attend the meetings, I encourage the supervisors, I encourage the county engineer, I make sure they're going to say what they need to say, and if...one of the supervisors needed to attend the city council meeting, I would call and remind them that the meeting needs to have their attendance and I sure wish they would go.

And while the leader of the proponents was trying to keep interest for the bike trail alive, another proponent was trying to sustain efforts of the leader.

> I have given him encouragement to keeping pushing this.

Most roles in the bike trail project focused on strategies of shaping local public perceptions. Proponents not only tried to drum up support via word-of-mouth, but also took another step by writing letters to the local council in support of the trail.

Opponents were more passive in their approach although two of the four with property adjacent to the route said they did respond to the mail survey solicited by the city council. In fact, opponents said all they did was publicly oppose the project at meetings, to county supervisors, and to other community members. Proponents, on the other hand, when they found out written responses were being solicited from potential opponents by the city council, were compelled to encourage supporters to deluge the council with their own unsolicited letters of support as well as employing a few behind-the-scenes tactics to keep the public and government engaged. All those involved knew the sway public opinion had on local government and thus played a role in trying to shape it.

Role Nominations from Others

As part of the strategy to gather information about recruitment, respondents were asked as they made nominations of others to comment on the role of the nominee in the project. This was done by asking which individuals first became involved in the project (initiators), who got the respondent involved, who the respondent got involved, and who was active but did not fall into any of the three former categories. Sometimes a nominee was both an initiator and got the respondent involved, or the nominee could also have gotten involved as an initiator and because of the recruitment efforts of the respondent.

Table 6 illustrates the results of these "role codes" as they pertain to nominations made by trail proponents. The total number of nominations proponents made involving the 18 valid bike trail participants is 58 out of 94 total made by bike trail participants. This means there is overlap in *who* they actually nominated. However, the table breaks down the responses by nominations, not the 18 who received them.

To provide a bit of background information, of 94 nominations (not including self), 58 were made by trail proponents (62%) for a mean of 4.8 nominations per proponent. Given that the ratio of valid bike trail participants is 2:1, this is almost the 67% one would expect. Note that 47 of the 58 nominations (81%) made by proponents are other proponents. Again, based on the proportion of participants interviewed who were proponents, one would expect 67% of their nominations to be other proponents. Thus, 81% indicates proponents are more likely to mention members of their own group as actively involved. Only 11 of the 58 (19%) are opponent nominations.

The "count" column in the table shows the number of nominations each category received. Only four categories existed in the questionnaire: 1. Initiator, 2. They got you involved, 3. You got them involved, and 4. Just actively involved. However, since nominees could be both initiators and recruiters, they could be listed as "initiator and they got you involved." Thus, the counts for the first six categories listed are mutually exclusive. But since each category alone may not encompass the total number that fell into that group (i.e., "initiators" and "initiator and they got you involved" are all initiators), totals had to be calculated to capture the different kinds of nominations. These totals are listed among the three last categories (Total initiator nominations, Total they got you involved, and Total you got them involved). These were summed by adding, for example, all counts for "Initiator," "Initiator and you got them involved," and "Initiator and they got you involved" for the total initiator nominations.

The column, "Category n," shows the denominator for that category, which is derived from adding all of the nominations proponents made. The percent of category nominations therefore shows the proportion of nominations proponents received from proponent respondents in contrast to the proportion of nominations opponents received from proponent

Table 6. Roles According to Proponents

Trail Nominations (n=58) Made by Proponents	Count	Percent of Category Nominations (includes both pro- and opponent nominees)		Percent of Proponents' Nominations (n=58)[1]
		Category n	*Percent*	
Nominees are proponents (n=47)				
Initiator	15	16	94%	26%
They got you involved	3	3	100%	5%
You got them involved	7	7	100%	12%
Initiator and they got you involved	3	4	75%	5%
Initiator and you got them involved	3	3	100%	5%
Just actively involved	16	25	64%	28%
Total initiator nominations	21	23	91%	36%
Total they got you involved	6	7	86%	10%
Total you got them involved	10	10	100%	17%
Nominees are opponents (n=11)				
Initiator	1	16	6%	2%
They got you involved	0	3	0%	0%
You got them involved	0	7	0%	0%
Initiator and they got you involved	1	4	25%	2%
Initiator and you got them involved	0	3	0%	0%
Just actively involved	9	25	36%	16%
Total initiator nominees	2	23	9%	3%
Total they got you involved	1	7	14%	2%
Total you got them involved	0	10	0%	0%

[1]Total will not equal 100% since more than one category may be applicable for each nominee.

respondents. The last column, "Percent of Proponents' Nominations," is calculated by dividing "category n" by 58, or the total number of nominations made by proponents, to get a better picture of the categories dominating total proponent nominations.

Results show that proponents more likely nominate other proponents as initiators (91% of "initiating" nominations were made by proponents, for proponents, while only 9% of "initiating" nominations mentioned opponents). Proponents were also more likely to say other proponents got them involved (86% in contrast to 14% of nominations that fell to opponents). A total of ten nominations were made by proponents for "you got them involved;" all of the nominees mentioned were other proponents. Thus recruitment by proponents did not occur across group lines, whereas there was admittedly some recruitment in the other direction (14%) since proponents said opponents got them involved.

Opponents nominated an average of 6 nominees per opponent in contrast to the 4.8 made by proponents (Table 7). Thirteen out of 36 nominations (36%) made by opponents were other opponents. This is expected based on the 2:1 ratio discussed earlier. Thus, we would expect opponents to mention 33% of their nominees as other opponents. Opponents were therefore not more likely to name members from their group as actively involved in the bike trail.

Table 7. Roles According to Opponents

Trail Nominations (n=36) Made by Opponents

	Count	Percent of Category Nominations (includes both pro- and opponent nominees)		Percent of Proponents' Nominations (n=58)[1]
		Category n	*Percent*	
Nominees are opponents (n=13)				
Initiator	0	7	0%	0%
They got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
You got them involved	3	3	100%	8%
Initiator and they got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
Initiator and you got them involved	0	0	NA	NA
Just actively involved	10	26	38%	28%
Total initiator nominations	0	7	0%	0%
Total they got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
Total you got them involved	3	3	100%	8%
Nominees are proponents (n=23)				
Initiator	7	7	100%	19%
They got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
You got them involved	0	3	0%	0%
Initiator and they got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
Initiator and you got them involved	0	0	NA	NA
Just actively involved	16	26	62%	44%
Total initiator nominees	7	7	100%	19%
Total they got you involved	0	0	NA	NA
Total you got them involved	0	3	0%	0%

[1]Total will not equal 100% since more than one category may be applicable for each nominee.

Like proponents, opponents also agreed that the bike trail project initiators were proponents (100%), not opponents. However, unlike proponents, opponents said that none of their nominees got them involved, either opponents or proponents. Concerning recruitment in the other direction (opponents got the nominee involved), opponents said three nominees, all of whom were other opponents, became involved because of the efforts

of the respondent. Unlike the responses given by proponents who said some (14% of nominations) opponents got them involved, opponents report they only got other opponents involved.

The general implications of these findings suggest that project opponents did not get involved as initiators but as reactionaries to the project. Recruitment is usually done within group, that is, proponents recruit others who also support the project while opponents recruit other opponents. And while some proponents admit to becoming involved on behalf of the recruitment efforts of opponents, no opponents said they became involved because of proponent recruitment (or for that matter, opponent recruitment).

Initial involvement

What factors influence residents to first get involved in community projects, especially controversial ones that offer residents only political and social predicaments? Project participants who said their involvement was strictly voluntary (as opposed to occupationally or organizationally motivated) were asked why they first became involved with the bike trail issue. Seven proponents said their involvement was strictly voluntary. These proponents, some of whom were walkers, thought there was a genuine need for the trail and that it would be a positive asset for the community.

> I'm a walker. I walk the streets and I know what condition they're in. For future generations, we need a good walking trail. People are more health-conscious and it just needs to be done.

> Because it was an idea and a goal that was set by the [local historic preservation group] and it's there and it makes sense. And I like to walk too. I've seen some that are really beautifully done and...people in those communit[ies] are proud of them and I think that would be something that *our* community would be proud of...and recreation is something that's really important.

On the other hand, opponents (4 of whom said their involvement was strictly voluntary) say they got involved initially because it directly affected them and their families.

> [I opposed] its presence adjoining our property.

> It directly affected me.

> I was interested in it to know what it was going to entail and we had [grand]kids that would use it and I just wanted to know where it was...

For those project opponents who said their involvement was strictly voluntary, they may agree that they responded to a situation the proposal forced them into. Their involvement was initiated for substantially different reasons than it was for proponents who felt a trail would be a community improvement project that would benefit everybody.

A number of factors appear to be influential in determining whether residents of Meadville would support or oppose the bike trail project. Spatial aspects and NIMBYism were likely a key factor, although not necessarily a deciding one. Demographic characteristics are also important. Although it is difficult to make any claims about the income level of bike trail opponents, the same is not true for their age and local tenure. According to the five respondents representing the six interviewed (and assuming those who participated are no different than those who refused), opponents are older than proponents, have no children under 18 living at home, have lived in the area longer, have less education, and are less likely to be employed on a full-time basis when compared to project proponents. However, as Gamson and Irons (1961) found in regard to the fluoridation controversies, community characteristics and events are likely more crucial determinants of controversial outcomes than are any fixed demographic attributes. Nevertheless, the predictive value of demographic characteristics should not be wholly dismissed when it comes to the organization of opposition to the bike trail.

Demographic and spatial differences seem to have little effect on perceptions of controversy and motivations for participation once sides become polarized. When sides emerged, community characteristics, in combination with the type of event, attenuated the atmosphere of controversy the bike trail issue was creating. Both sides perceived the diversity of opinions that characterized the issue, one that neither side felt was "resolved." Despite the lack of resolution and the failure to reach an adequate compromise, one outcome of the project was that it did not create any permanent social or political divisions within the community.

The roles project participants played did not differ according to their support or opposition. Both sides understood the importance of shaping public opinion in the community and how important it was to local government officials. Adherents to both sides pursued techniques that would promote their views. Even though many residents downplayed their simple, "talking" role in the bike trail, these acts would be deciding factors in the outcome of the project. Proponents therefore tried to recruit other proponents more so than opponents tried to recruit. No opponents interviewed said they had been recruited to get involved in the trail; one-third of the proponents had. One-third of the proponents also said they recruited others, in contrast to half that proportion (17%) of opponents.

Who were proponents recruiting? Other proponents. Proponents said they got other proponents involved and became involved due to the recruitment efforts of other proponents. Opponents, on the other hand, said they got other opponents involved, but that nobody got them involved.

While project proponents put their motivation for supporting the trail in terms of community interest (health and community pride) and their own recreational interests, opponents were compelled to get involved based on personal property and family interests. Opponents got involved because they felt they had to protect such interests. Their involvement was reactionary in comparison to proponents who were identified by both sides as the initiators of the trail project.

It appears that proximity of the proposed trail, along with demographic characteristics, play a role in residents' decisions to support or oppose the trail. Yet there is another area that has not been addressed in relation to this decision—that of a resident's ties or position within community networks.

Networks

The political atmosphere of a community emerges from a complex set of networks that exists among residents. As Brown and Nylander (1998) point out, network density, size, and organizational membership of identified community leaders are important aspects of a community's structure and may conceivably influence the outcome of certain events and

projects. Networks as sociological variables transcend personal psychological traits, thereby adding an often overlooked dimension of community development structure (Brown and Nylander, 1998).

Friendship Network Characteristics

Do trail proponents and opponents differ in the number of close friends they have? Do they differ in the number of *local* friends they have as opposed to those living outside the community? Relative to the resident leaders we interviewed, are their friends more or less active in community improvement projects than they are? Lastly, are any of their close friends on opposite sides of the trail issue? These are a few questions this section will answer.

We asked residents actively involved in the trail project a series of questions about their close personal friends. "By close personal friends, we mean people you can trust and depend on for companionship." These questions were based on the methodology established by Wellman, Carrington, and Hall in their 1968 and 1978 follow-up study of personal friendships as indicators of territorial community (1988). We also limited the scope of "close personal friends" to people with whom they did not live. Thus, family members and relatives could be included among their close personal friends as long as they did not live with them. A maximum number of six friends could be named.

In addition to asking for the names of their close personal friends, the research team collected other demographic information about their friends—namely, were they male or female; how long had they known each other; where did they live; were they related and if so, how; how often they spoke; and how active were they in Meadville projects (if applicable). Respondents were also asked if they were closer to some of their friends than others, and if so, with whom. Furthermore, we asked them if all their friends knew each other.

Table 8 summarizes the friendship data we collected on bike trail proponents and opponents. Note that one opponent refused to answer friendship related questions; thus the size of the group is reduced from six to five. Moreover, one proponent (8%) and two

opponents (40%) said they had no close personal friends. These three with no friends *are* included when computing the average number of friends for each group, although the single opponent refusal is not. Again, the number of project opponents on whom such generalizations are made is small, indicating potential limitations of these data.

The results of a comparison of the friendship characteristics of each group show that proponents have, on average, twice as many close personal friends as trail opponents (4.3 versus 2.2). Proponents have also known their close personal friends longer, on average, than opponents. When respondents were asked whether their friends lived outside the community, 55% of trail proponents and virtually all of trail opponents mentioned they had at least one close friend who did not live in Meadville. Does this mean opponents are better connected beyond the community? Not necessarily. About the same proportion of friends named by each group live outside the community (22% for proponents; 27% for opponents).
Out of all the friends named by proponents (51) and opponents (11), each group has roughly the same proportion of close personal friends living in Meadville (78% and 73%, respectively). Similarly, of their friends who live in Meadville, the same proportion are about as equally involved in community projects as the respondents are (28% and 25%, respectively). But proponents report that a greater proportion of their close friends living in Meadville are more involved in community projects (25%) than they are, while only 13% of opponents' local friends are. It appears that trail proponents perceive more of their close personal friends as more involved in community projects than do opponents. So while 53% of the friends named by proponents may be as involved in projects or more so than proponents, opponents report that only 38% of their friends are at least as active. The evidence presented in the next section shows trail opponents appear to be less involved in community activities than proponents. At least in regard to formal group membership, the magnitude of the 62% of opponents' friends who are less involved than the opponents we interviewed suggests the lack of involvement of their friends is even further magnified.

Do proponents have more or less intense friendships than their opponent counterparts? For the most part, interpretation was left open to each project participant to determine the level of friendship that exists between them and their close personal friends.

Table 8. Friendship Characteristics of Bike Trail Proponents and Opponents

Friendship Characteristics	Proponents			Opponents		
	n	*Number*	*Percent*	*n*	*Number*	*Percent*
Total sum of close friends	12	51		5	11	
Mean number of friends	12	4.3		5	2.2	
Standard deviation		1.9			2.1	
Members in each group with no close friends	12	1	8%	5	2	40%
Average number of years respondents have known their friends	11	24.7		3	21.5	
Standard deviation		12.6			13.5	
Number of members who name as close friend at least one person of opposite gender	11	3	27%	3	1	33%
Total number of friends of opposite gender who are named as close friend	51	3	6%	11	1	9%
Number of members who name as close friend someone who is related	11	1	9%	4	1	25%
Total number of friends named who are related to the respondent	51	2	4%	11	1	9%
Number of respondents who name as close friends at least one nonresident of Meadville	11	6	55%	3	3	100%
Total number of close friends who are not residents of Meadville	51	11	22%	11	3	27%
Number of respondents who name as close friends other residents of Meadville	11	9	82%	3	3	100%
Total number of friends named as close friends who are residents of Meadville	51	40	78%	11	8	73%
Involvement of close friends living in Meadville in community projects	40			8		
More involved than the respondent	40	10	25%	8	1	13%
Involved about the same	40	11	28%	8	2	25%
Less involved than the respondent	40	19	47%	8	5	62%
How often do respondents speak with their close friends?	51			11		
Almost every day	51	11	22%	11	1	9%
At least once a week	51	28	55%	11	4	36%
At least once a month	51	12	23%	11	6	55%
Less than once a month	51	0	0%	11	0	0%
Number of respondents who feel closer to some more than others among their close friends, as opposed to equally close to all of them	9	8	89%	3	3	100%
All of the close friends named by the respondent know each other	11	8	73%	3	2	67%

Yet one question that serves as an equalizer of sorts in regard to the *intensity* of the friendship is the frequency with which they communicate. Proponents report they speak either face-to-face or over the phone (not via e-mail or letters), on average, more often with their close personal friends than opponents do. Of the 51 close personal friends mentioned by

proponents, proponents speak to 77% of them at least once a week. Proponents speak to less than half (45%) of their close personal friends as often. Neither proponents nor opponents report speaking to their close friends as infrequently as less than once a month on average.

Two-thirds of opponents say all of the friends they mentioned "know" each other, somewhat less than the 73% of proponents' friends. This might indicate that the friendship networks of proponents are denser than the networks of opponents. But what if those networks overlap? Table 9 isolates only those friendships occurring within the trail network. Indeed, one of four proponents who mentioned having a friend within the bike trail project network named as a close personal friend someone with an opposite viewpoint on the issue. No trail opponents mentioned anyone within the trail project network as a close friend. One can assume there is little overlap of friendship networks between opponents and proponents

Table 9. Friendship Characteristics Specific to the Bike Trail

Friendship Characteristics Specific to the Bike Trail	Proponents			Opponents		
	n	*Number*	*Percent*	*n*	*Number*	*Percent*
Number of members who named a close friend within the trail network of 18	11	4	36%	3	0	0%
Total number of close friends named within the trail network of 18	51	6	12%	11	0	0%
Number of members on each side with a close friendship with someone on the opposite side of the trail issue	4	1	25%	0	NA	NA
Total number of friends named within the trail network of 18 on the opposite side of the trail issue	6	1	17%	0	NA	NA
Total number of friends named within the trail network of 18 as someone the respondent is "closest to"	6	0	0%	0	NA	NA

at least in regard to the bike trail since only one out of the total six close personal friends mentioned by proponents and opponents within the trail project network took an opposite viewpoint on the issue. I will now turn to a calculation of friendship density to determine whether or not the web of friendship ties among proponents and opponents is different as it relates to the trail network.

Friendship Density within the Trail Network

In the network literature, density is described as "the extent to which all possible relations are actually present" and is one type of descriptor used to describe the "texture of social networks" (Scott, 1991:32). Friendship networks are important to an analysis of social capital in Meadville as they constitute informal social capital used to benefit the community (Wacquant, 1997). As already established, informal negotiations and pressures play a key role in community development projects and thus justify an examination.

Directional density is calculated according to the following (Scott, 1991):

$$l/n(n-1)$$

where l=number of relationships between individuals and
n=number in the group and
(n-1)=the number in the group minus the respondent (who cannot name him/herself)

A density of 1 means all relationships exist, thus, most densities occur as a fraction or decimal. Density is computed directionally in this case since person A has an opportunity to mention person B as a close personal friend, while person B *also* has an opportunity to mention person A as a close personal friend since these questions were asked of all trail participants. This multiplies by a factor of two the possible number of relationships, as opposed to non-directional density computations. Again, note that the single opponent refusal to answer the friendship questions reduces the size of the opponent group by one.

What we can glean from Table 10 is that the friendship density among trail participants is relatively low in all cases but highest within the group of proponents. This, of course, has an effect on the density of the group that includes both proponents and opponents together. In other words, proponents could name other proponents and opponents as friends, and vice versa. When intergroup density was calculated (proponents named only opponents and opponents named only proponents as friends), one relationship was found to exist among a possible 120 leading to a density of .008. The lowest density was that found among the group of opponents where none mentioned each other as a close personal friend. It therefore appears that while some proponents are friends with each other, opponents are likely to have come together not out of friendship, but out of a common cause that united them in their

Table 10. Comparing Different Friendship Densities According to Trail Group

Density group	Possible No. of Relationships	No. of Relationships That Exist	Density
Proponents and opponents together (n=17)	272 (n=17*16)	6	.022
Proponents naming opponents and opponents naming proponents (n=5; n=12)	120 (n=12*5*2)	1	.008
Proponents mentioning proponents (n=12)	132 (n=12*11)	5	.038
Opponents mentioning opponents (n=5)	20 (n=5*4)	0	.000

efforts against the trail. Such evidence further confirms the lack of ties opponents have to one another.

Membership in Formal Organizations

Not unlike the Lynds' Middletown, Meadville exhibits a "patterned avoidance of unusual living" (Lynd and Lynd, 1929:429). This patterned avoidance can be reinforced through norms promoting civic loyalty. Encouraging membership in voluntary civic organizations serves to properly socialize residents in the community, especially newcomers, by familiarizing them with "the way things are done around here." According to Lynd and Lynd (1929), civic loyalty and patriotism are fashioned to apply social pressure to community residents to encourage conformity and some semblance of social control through citizen membership in voluntary group organizations.

Putnam (1995), in a nationally recognized article, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," describes the decline of formal organizational membership in the U.S. and its link to civil society. Specifically, he attributes increasing rates of uninvolvement in voluntary organizations as the cause for this country's declining collective social responsibility. Too many people are too often giving up league games in favor of bowling alone, creating a culture of independent citizens who can no longer act together for the benefit of larger society.

What meaning does formal group membership hold for Meadville residents? One way to determine the intensity and nature of civic engagement at the community level is to query respondents about the number of formal organizations they belong to, the type of

organization they belong to, and whether they take a leadership role in the group by becoming an officer or member of its board of directors. Such questions were asked of bike trail respondents in the self-administered demographic questionnaire (recall that of the 12 trail proponents, 11 returned the questionnaire along with 5 of the 6 trail opponents).

Respondents were asked to list any organizations, groups, or associations to which they had belonged over the past three years. A tally of the responses from the 11 bike trail proponents resulted in a total of 40 group memberships—an average of 3.6 organizations (SD=2.7) per individual, ranging from 0 to 8 formal group memberships. Only one proponent (9%) reported not belonging to any groups in the past three years. Thus, the average number of groups for proponents who reported membership was 4 per individual.

In contrast, three of the five trail opponents (60%) reported not belonging to any groups in the past three years. Furthermore, the 2 opponents who did say they belonged to groups reported significantly fewer organizations—a total of 3 for an average of 0.6 organizations per opponent (SD=0.9), ranging from 0 to 2. For those opponents who reported belonging to a group in the past three years, the average number of memberships held is 1.5.

Now that quantitative differences have been noted in the number of organizations to which trail proponents and opponents belong, is there a difference between the *kind* of groups in which they belong? Respondents were asked to list the name of each group of which they were a member. As mentioned previously, during the coding process, all groups were assigned to one of six categories: fraternal and interest, political and civic, business and professional, community service groups, church groups, and recreational groups. Proponents said they belonged to a total of 40 groups in the past three years. The types of groups they named was fairly evenly distributed among three of the six categories (Table 11). Of the 40 group affiliations reported by 10 proponents, one-fourth constituted fraternal and interest groups with another fourth comprising business and professional groups. The third most popular type of group affiliation was political and civic (20% of proponent responses). Community service groups were mentioned less frequently (13% of responses) as were recreational groups (10%). Three groups named were church-related (7%).

Table 11. Types of Formal Group Membership Held by Proponents and Opponents

Type of Group	Percent of Proponent (n=10) Responses (Total groups=40)	Percent of Opponent (n=2) Responses (Total groups=3)
Fraternal and interest	25	0
Political and civic	20	0
Business and professional	25	67
Community service	13	33
Church	7	0
Recreation	10	0

The involvement of proponents in fraternal and interest groups suggests a shared identity that has the potential to become the basis for community service. Proponents are not absent from the business realm either, and in fact, indicate a presence in many facets of community life organized around formal group membership. Opponents, on the other hand, indicate no involvement in organized fraternal and interest groups. Two out of the three memberships mentioned are affiliated with business and professional groups and one with community service groups.

To what extent are local coordination efforts dominated by individuals who count themselves among the trail proponents? This may be aptly addressed by the intensity or level of their involvement in these organizations. Intensity or level of involvement can be measured to some degree by asking members whether they have taken a leadership role in the organization by becoming an officer or board member. This establishes a decision-making role community residents can play in the formal organizational structure of the community and coordination that can result as a byproduct of their influence. For opponents, one of the three group affiliations involved serving as an officer. For proponents, 34 out of 40 (85%) affiliations involved serving as an officer. Again, while the data on opponents is limited, the intensity of involvement appears to be richer among proponents.

But at what level does this involvement occur? Respondents who responded "yes" to the question "Have you been an officer or member of its board of directors in the past three years?" were instructed to indicate the level of their position at the local, county,

multicounty, state, multistate, or national level (Table 12). About half (56%) of trail proponent responses that indicated being an officer or board member occurred at the local level; 12% of "officer" responses were at the county level, 15% were at the multicounty level, 6% were state-level, and none were multistate or national level board positions. For trail opponents, the solitary officer or board level response occurred at the local level.

Table 12. Level of Group Officer/Board Member Position Held by Proponents and Opponents

	Officer/ board member	Percent board member/officer responses at each level					
Trail position	*n*	*Local*	*County*	*Multicounty*	*State*	*Multistate*	*National*
Proponents (Total groups=40)	34	56	12	15	6	0	0
Opponents (Total groups=3)	1	100	0	0	0	0	0

Most noteworthy in the examination of formal group affiliation differences among trail proponents and opponents is the sheer number of groups proponents belonged to in the past three years and the lack of formal group membership exhibited among opponents. The research of Brown and Nylander (1998) found that identified leaders belonged to more organizations in the community as compared to other residents (non-leaders). What kind of implication does this have on characterizing project opponents? Are they really community leaders or is their activism in community affairs spurred only by project opposition?

With only three groups mentioned by opponents, little can be gleaned from the type of organizations with whom they are affiliated, except for the fact that they limit their membership to business and professional, as well as community service groups. Opponents do not belong to fraternal and interest groups, political and civic, church, or recreation groups. Even more can be learned from the wealth of data available on the 11 proponents who completed the demographic questionnaire, 10 of whom indicated belonging to a formal group. Their membership affiliations involved all six types of groups. Of those ten individuals, 80% say they have been an officer in at least one group. Of the opponents who

completed a demographic questionnaire, only two said they belonged to formal organizations, one of whom reported being an officer or board member in the past three years. The implication of these results pertains to the level of involvement not only in community activities, but the interaction such involvement necessarily brings. Communication and frequent contact among group members is required to function as a group, and opponents apparently tend to interact less frequently with others within the context of formal group membership. As compared to the proponents, the resulting impact might be less influence on community affairs unless it concerns stopping projects. Especially with the greater level of ties shared among proponents, their influence is expected to dominate community activities. On the flip side, however, as has been suggested throughout this thesis, an increased pressure to submit to a sometimes ill-defined, nebulous social will can also accompany such close-knit ties, making the political stakes even higher for those more intensely involved in their community.

Involvement in the Seven Projects

Another measure of the level of community involvement can be derived from the participation of proponents and opponents in any of the other six project issues studied in the community. This is done by comparing the average number of "valid" project involvements between trail opponents and proponents occurring throughout the course of the research. In contrast to the question that asks about formal group membership in the past three years, this measure indicates the current level of involvement in community wide activities that are collectively oriented (part of the criteria for selecting them). But this measure also limits respondents to seven projects selected by researchers through local nominations for their inclusive nature and community-oriented application. Thus, involvement in Boy Scouts, Little League, or any other number of groups is overlooked. The projects researchers selected are public in nature and the related events subject to public scrutiny and criticism. Participation in these kinds of activities provides still another perspective into who gets involved as leaders.

Interestingly, bike trail proponents and opponents seemed to be involved at the same level in the seven group projects studied in Meadville for event analysis. Including the bike trail, if one sums for the proponents the total number of instances where both self- and others-acknowledgement occurred in relation to the seven community projects (others recognized them as being active and they recognized themselves as being active), a total of 20 "valid" nominations occurred. Dividing 20 by the number of proponents, we arrive at an average of 1.7 projects in which trail proponents were "validly" active. For project opponents, the total sum (including the bike trail project) is 10, divided by 6 opponents creates a mean also of 1.7. According to those seven projects studied, it appears that trail proponents and opponents were equally involved or at least recognized as involved at an active level. However, as noted in Table 2 (on page 58), this involvement is generally limited to opposition. Out of the 10 valid project involvements, trail opponents opposed 8 (80%) of them. When the trail project is removed, opponents opposed half of their valid projects.

Project Networks

In addition to friendship networks, other kinds of networks may be key to understanding community participation. According to Brown and Nylander (1998), leaders have more professional ties than do non-leaders. And people with more dense networks in general are more likely to discuss public and community issues.

As Table 13 indicates, valid trail participants made a total of 153 "others" nominations in regard to the trail (this does not mean 153 individuals but rather 47). In addition to the 18 valid participants, the 18 named 29 other individuals who did not qualify (via one first- or two second-level nominations) for inclusion in the network. The total number of valid trail nominations, that is, those nominations that included the 18 we interviewed, was 94 out of 153 (61%) for a mean of 5.2 valid nominations per "valid" person. As mentioned earlier, of the 94 valid nominations, proponents made 62% while opponents made 38%. Of the valid nominations made by trail proponents, 81% were for other proponents while a mere 19% were for opponents, indicating proponents were more likely to name other proponents as active participants than opponents. Project opponents, on

Table 13. Nominations Made by 18 Valid Trail Participants

Nominations	Count	n	Percent
Ratio of valid trail proponents (12) to valid trail opponents (6)	2:1		67%:33%
Total nominations	153		
Total number of nominated individuals	47		
Number of valid trail participants	18	47	38%
Number of not valid individuals	29	47	62%
Total number of valid trail nominations	94	153	61%
Total number of not valid trail nominations	59	153	39%
Total (valid and not valid) nominations made by proponents	91	153	59%
Total proponent nominations for valid trail participants	58	94	62%
Total nominations for other proponents	47	58	81%
Total nominations for other opponents	11	58	19%
Total (valid and not valid) nominations made by opponents	62	153	41%
Total opponent nominations for valid trail participants	36	94	38%
Total nominations for other opponents	13	36	36%
Total nominations for other proponents	23	36	64%

the other hand, named a similar ratio of project proponents and opponents to the actual ratio that developed from our network sampling methods. Of the 36 valid nominations opponents made, 36% were for other opponents and 64% for proponents, more in line with the number of proponents to opponents (2 to 1 or 67% to 33%).

Of the 94 valid nominations, proponents received 70 (74%) and opponents received a total of 24 (26%). Thus, proponents received an average of 5.8 nominations per person while opponents received an average of 4. Proponents were recognized as more involved in the project than were opponents.

Figure 6 provides an illustration of the nomination networks made by proponents and opponents. Nominations made strictly by proponents appear in the illustration at the top, while nominations made strictly by opponents are shown at the bottom. Note that proponents only recognized (at least twice) 3 out of the 6 opponents (50%) as being actively involved in the trail project while their recognition of proponents was more widespread. On the other hand, opponents recognized only 5 key proponents out of the 12 actively involved (42%). Note also that reciprocal nominations largely appear to occur within-group.

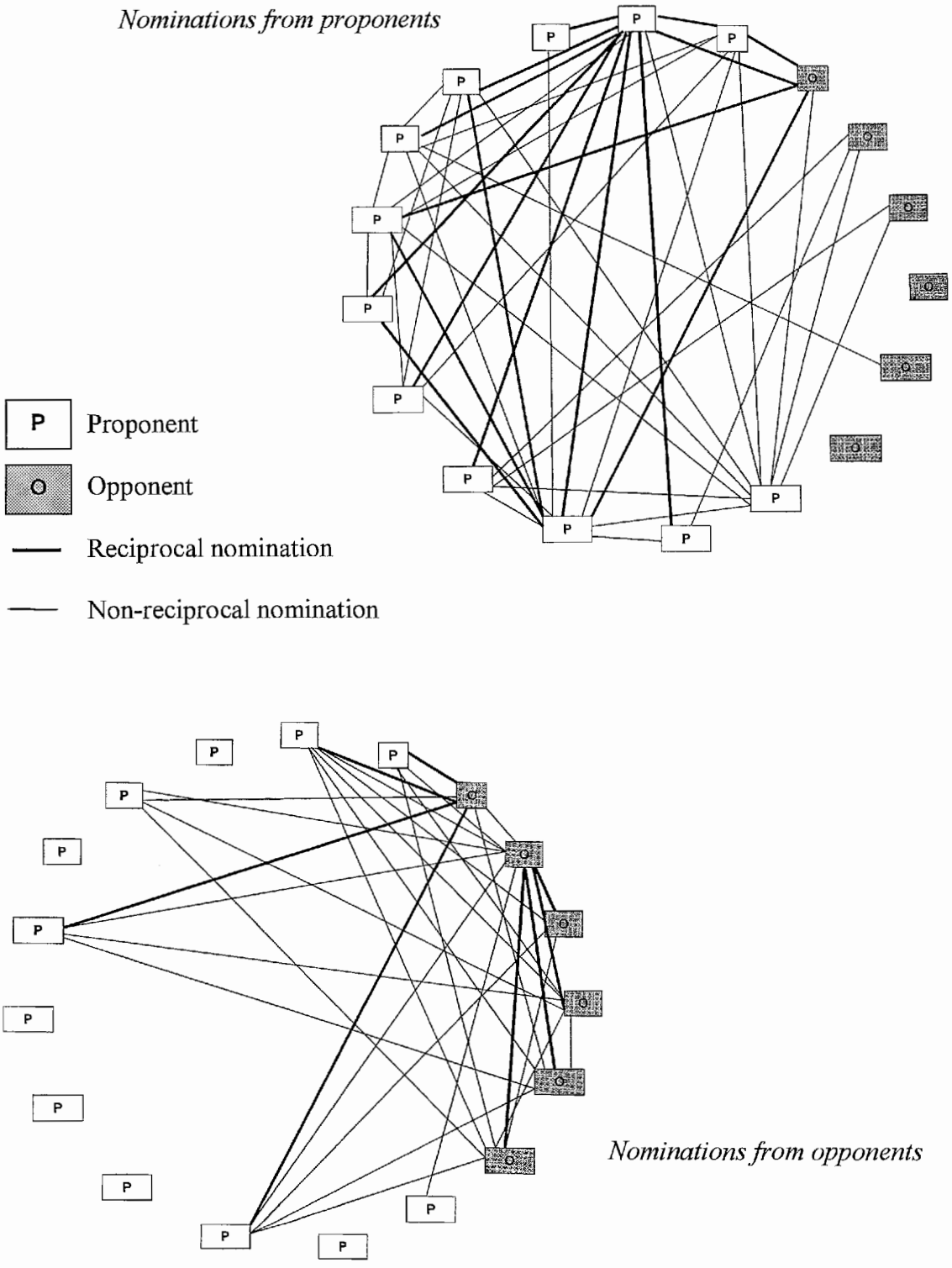


Figure 6. Trail Project Nomination Networks

Most Contact

In addition to specific names of nominees active in the project, respondents were also asked a number of questions about their tie to that individual, one of which included: "With whom have you had the most contact concerning the trail issue?" Over half (52%) of nominations made by proponents were "most contact" nominations in contrast to only 36% of nominations made by opponents (Table 14). Proponents seem to have more contact with those they nominated than opponents do. But with whom are proponents and opponents having the most contact? Proponents overwhelmingly say they have the most contact with other proponents (90% of "most contacts"). Not quite half (46%) of most contact nominations made by opponents occurred with other opponents; the majority (54%) of opponents' "most contacts" occurred with project proponents. Thus, it looks like project opponents were about equally as likely to have the most contact with someone on either side of the issue, corroborating qualitative evidence provided earlier.

Table 14. Most Contact About the Trail Issue

Proponents	Count	Percent
Total valid nominations made by proponent respondents	58/94	62%
Total nominations with whom proponent respondents had the most contact with the nominee about the trail	30	52%
Nominations with whom proponents had the most contact who were other proponents	27	90%
Opponents	**Count**	**Percent**
Total valid nominations made by opponent respondents	36/94	38%
Total nominations with whom opponent respondents had the most contact with the nominee about the trail	13	36%
Nominations with whom opponents had the most contact who were other opponents	6	46%

Most Influence

Respondents were asked to indicate who, among the nominees they had listed and including themselves, had the most influence on the decisions made concerning the bike trail. Respondents could choose more than one nominee. The number of valid nominations jumps from 94 (other nominees) to 112 (which includes themselves) by adding the number of

possible self nominations (18). Of the 112 possible nominations for this category, 1 was missing and 7 were "don't know" responses for a total of n=104.

Table 15 shows that proponents were more likely than opponents to mention people who had the most influence on the decisions concerning the bike trail (33% versus 20%). Results also show that both trail proponents and opponents felt trail proponents had the most influence on the decisions made regarding the trail (91% of proponent nominations and 86% of opponent nominations). This may be explained in terms of the more intense involvement of project proponents in the development of the trail project rather than the outcome.

Table 15. Most Influence on the Decisions Made About the Trail

Proponents	Count	Percent
Total valid nominations made by proponent respondents	69/104	66%
Total nominations with whom proponent respondents had the most influence on decisions made about the trail	23	33%
Nominations with the most influence who were other proponents	21	91%
Opponents	**Count**	**Percent**
Total valid nominations made by opponent respondents	35/104	34%
Total nominations with whom opponent respondents had the most influence on decisions made about the trail	7	20%
Nominations with the most influence who were other opponents	1	14%

Business or Professional Contact

Did respondents have any business or professional contact with people they mentioned as actively involved in the bike trail project? "By 'professional or business contact,' I mean those with whom you frequently communicate concerning business or professional matters." Table 16 shows that out of the 94 valid nominations (respondents could not mention themselves), neither group was more likely to say they had more close business or professional ties. However, proponents were more likely to say their business and professional contact was with other proponents (87%) while opponents were less likely to have professional contact with other opponents (29%). Again, there was little contact

Table 16. Close Business or Professional Contact with Trail Participants

Proponents	Count	Percent
Total valid nominations made by proponent respondents	58/94	62%
Total nominations with whom proponent respondents had close business or professional contact	23	40%
Nominations with whom the respondent had close business or professional contact who were other proponents	20	87%
Opponents	**Count**	**Percent**
Total valid nominations made by opponent respondents	36/94	38%
Total nominations with whom opponent respondents had close business or professional contact	14	39%
Nominations with whom the respondent had close business or professional contact who were other opponents	4	29%

beyond the group of proponents over to the other side, while the reverse cannot be said for opponents.

This could mean a number of things: The ratio of proponents to opponents of 2:1 meant that contact opponents had with proponents should be around 33% (it was 29%). Likewise, this would mean proponents should have the most contact with 67% of other proponents. Thus, proponents were more likely to have the most contact with members of similar sentiment. From the standpoint of policy implications, when it comes to ties, even though opponents may be out of the loop in regard to formal organizational membership and friendship networks, they are not wholly left out of the community because of their professional or business ties. This may be one way to reach opponents to socialize them or get them involved in community projects. However, this may also mean that using only business or professional networks for community socialization is ineffective since it did not provide enough community pressure to change opponents' minds on the bike trail issue.

Served on Board

"Do you or have you over the past 3 years served on the same board of directors with any of these individuals?" Table 17 shows that roughly the same proportion of nominees named by proponent and opponent respondents had served on the same board of directors

Table 17. Served on Same Board of Directors with Trail Participants

Proponents	Count	Percent
Total valid nominations made by proponent respondents	58/94	62%
Total nominations with whom proponent respondents served on the same board of directors with trail nominee	3	5%
Nominations with whom the respondent served on the same board of directors who were other proponents	3	100%
Opponents	**Count**	**Percent**
Total valid nominations made by opponent respondents	36/94	38%
Total nominations with whom opponent respondents served on the same board of directors with trail nominee	3	8%
Nominations with whom the respondent served on the same board of directors who were other opponents	1	33%

(5% and 8%, respectively). All three shared positions named by proponent respondents were with other supporters, not opponents. Only 1 (33%) of the nominees had served on the same board with opponent respondents. If two affiliations are mentioned by opponents between project opponents and project supporters, how come those mentions were not reciprocated by proponents? It is known that indeed two cross-group links did exist since one proponent served on the same board with two opponents in the past three years, but the proponent failed to mention both of them.

These two crossover associations named by project opponents were not mentioned by the supporter in his answers. At least 5 board affiliations should have been mentioned by supporters, 5 out of 58 (or 9%), or about the same proportion as opponents. Of those 5, 3 should have been with other project proponents (60%) and 40% with project opponents, closer in line with the proportions opponents also mentioned. These results indicate that proponents are less likely to recognize having shared board membership with residents opposing the trail. They also reveal that few residents, either proponents or opponents, serve on the same boards with each other leaving few opportunities (aside from business or professional reasons) to come into contact with one another.

In this section basic network analysis comparing the two trail groups shows some notable differences. Regarding friends, almost half (40%) of the opponents said they had no

close friends, in contrast to one out of ten (9%) proponents. Moreover, proponents have twice as many friends on average than opponents. Kinship and gender of the friends mentioned seem to differ little between groups. All of the opponents who had close personal friends (n=3) mentioned they had at least one friend who was not a resident of Meadville; in contrast only half of the proponents had close friends not living locally. Yet each group had the same proportion of friends who did not live locally.

All three of the opponents who answered the friendship questions also indicated they had close friends who lived locally, in contrast to 82% of proponents. Thus, 2 out of 11 proponents did not mention local friends among the ones they listed. However, both sides in the aggregate had roughly the same proportion of friends living in Meadville. It is therefore difficult to make generalizations about which group tends to have more extra local ties in regard to close friendship networks.

With both groups naming roughly the same proportion of total friends living within the community, the involvement of their close friends in Meadville would be expected to be about the same. This is not the case. Over half of proponents' friends are as involved as they are, while opponents report that only 38% of their close friends are as involved as they are in community projects. Given the fact that proponents are less involved in formal organizations and their involvement in community projects is generally limited to roles of opposition, it stands to reason that opponents' friends are likely to be even less involved than friends of proponents since the question was asked *relative to the respondent.*

Not only do proponents have more, and more involved friends than do opponents, they also have more intense relationships with them. Contact between proponents and their friends occurs more frequently than it does between opponents and their friends. Proponents maintain weekly contact with 77% of their friends, whereas opponents maintain weekly contact with less than half (46%). There are few differences between the replies each group gave in regard to feeling closer to some friends than others, or whether all of the close friends named by respondents knew each other.

When friendship circles are narrowed down to only those including the 18 bike trail participants, one in three proponents mentioned someone within the bike trail network as a

close friend; no opponents did. A total of 12% of the proponents' friends were "validly" involved in the bike trail network; none of opponents' close friends were. Only one friendship contact transcended trail differences when one proponent mentioned one opponent among his six closest friends. While it appears that proponents are friends with other proponents (with this one exception), opponents are not close friends with either proponents or other opponents. Proponents who mentioned other proponents had a higher friendship density score compared to opponents' mention of other opponents. The overall cross-group density was very low with only 1 relationship mentioned out of a possible 120.

Formal group membership differed between trail groups. Proponents are more likely to be involved as members of community organizations than are opponents. Including respondents who said they did not belong to any groups in the past three years, proponents reported belonging to an average of 3.6 groups per person, six times more than the 0.6 average membership of opponents.

The kind of groups proponents belonged to was also different. Proponents belonged to fraternal and interest groups as well as business and professional groups. They also reported belonging to political and civic groups, as well as community service, church, and recreation groups. No opponents reported belonging to fraternal and interest groups, or political and civic groups. They belonged only to business and professional groups plus one membership in a community service group.

The level at which opponents participated in these groups is also weak. Out of 3 group affiliations, one was an officer or board member position (33%). Out of the 40 group memberships named by proponents, 34 (or 85%) were officer- or board-related positions. For both groups, the majority of those positions occurred at the local level.

Aside from formal group membership, bike trail opponents on the surface appeared to be as equally involved in the seven community development projects the research team selected for study in Meadville. Both proponents and opponents alike were "validly" involved in an average of 1.7 projects per person. When removing the bike trail, half of opponents' involvement was oppositional (2 out of 4). Of the proponents, only 2 out of 8 (25%) were involved in community projects in an oppositional capacity. Thus, trail

opponents were twice as likely to oppose other unrelated projects than were trail proponents.

Regarding the likelihood of each group to nominate individuals with similar viewpoints as actively involved in the trail, proponents were more likely to nominate other proponents. Opponents tended to make nominations in line with the actual proportion of proponents and opponents who qualified for the network analysis (67% proponents to 33% opponents). However, opponents were less likely to mention they had the "most contact" about the bike trail issue with anyone, when compared to proponents. When proponents named those they had the most contact with, they overwhelmingly tended to mention other proponents. Opponents, on the other hand, mentioned having the most contact with proponents. Both groups indicated that proponents had the most influence on the decision-making surrounding the bike trail issue. Both groups also reported they were more likely to have close business or professional contact with proponents. Proponents were more likely to recognize serving on the same board with other proponents than their shared board memberships with trail opponents.

Overall, a comparative analysis of the network ties of trail proponents and opponents reveal that opponents are largely withdrawn from community life with few exceptions. Furthermore, proponents are likely to utilize resources within their networks and tend not to associate with trail opponents, revealing the social exclusion of actors (Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996).

IX. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The bike trail in Meadville provides a classic case of community opposition to the creation of a public good. In fact, trail proponents everywhere would probably agree that local reactions, more than financial obstacles, pose the greatest threat to successful recreational development in rural areas (Doherty, 1998). Despite the expectation that social capital as an independent variable would lead to the implementation of a public good project, the nature of controversy in Meadville meant that the trail was well on its way to becoming a public "bad" with the potential to split the community for years to come. To avoid such an outcome, government—on behalf of the community—had to make a decision before close-knit relationships deteriorated. Both the nature of the community (high social capital) and characteristics of the event (a controversial land management issue where the public interest collided with private interests) combined to influence the process through which the community arrived at its final decision.

This research provides answers to the research questions outlined in the beginning of this thesis. The first question: "What are the social constraints, challenges, and consequences of residents' taking sides in a controversial project?" is answered by evidence that small, rural communities characterized by a geographically isolated, close-knit social environment are susceptible to a culture of personalized politics and conflict avoidance. The routine and frequent contact that occurs among community members creates conditions favoring a fragile balance of individual and social responsibilities and needs. When these conflict, the community becomes frozen in doubt and uncertainty. Controversial projects stall or are dropped as long as they continue to be personalized and threaten too much change, especially change that challenges deeply held values about private land tenure and public access. As Kriesberg notes, residents of small communities may regard high levels of controversy as conflict behavior (1973). Even the slightest hint of controversy may therefore be cause for avoidance.

In Meadville, all of the components that comprise high social capital such as trust, dense networks, and shared norms to protect the viability of community also served to

destroy, at least to some extent, its own progress in this case of controversy. Inter-connectivity and interdependence among town residents (community level social capital) may contribute to an avoidance of conflict to help preserve relationships that are a source of future opportunities and access to resources or aid. "In a small community where one's every action is known to all and one has personal relationships with those one opposes, the existence of conflict of interests within that community is an essential factor in determining whether or not a movement coalesces" (Massey, 1994:427).

When issues of a potential common good conflict with private concerns within a community having strong, collectively oriented sentiments, how is individual resistance justified within that specific social context? Threats to the community's social equilibrium originate from a group of citizens who have strong convictions about the morality of their opposition. But because it also put their individual needs ahead of the collective, they frame their opposition to the project in terms of the public good it will do the community. In this way, they can reconcile private needs with the benefit their opposition will bring to the collective within prevailing norms that favor community welfare. This his how they justify their actions.

What is the nature of opposition in a high social capital community and what form and direction does it take? In Meadville, the social structure that accommodates opposition is informal and is interlocked within a broader moral structure. And while formal structures such as local government administrations recognize disagreement, they lack the skills appropriate to facilitate open dialogue. This may be due to an historical pattern of avoiding controversy. As a result, they rely on informal and individual methods to deal with opposition, such as taking or making phone calls with residents who object to a project. When public meetings fail to provide an effective forum for public discourse, the city administration resorts again to more private means of gauging public opinion (by sending out mail surveys to opponents). Landowners can then privately explain their arguments and thereby avoid the public pressure of failing to act on behalf of the public good. In this way, the administration, in their willingness to encourage the expression of public opinion behind closed doors, effectively curtailing public debate.

Whose interests do local governments serve? Meadville provides an example of community controversy where one side was able to apply enough pressure to stop a project by successfully arguing that the project would become "a public bad" and relationships would deteriorate. By virtue of their ability to publicly contest the proposed trail, opponents swayed the members of the city and county governments to abandon their support resulting in project paralysis with little chance for recovery. In this case, local governments protected the interests of private landowners, revealing their role as champions of individual rights. The motivation is not to become re-elected, but to preserve community peace and perhaps some individual peace as well, considering the cross-pressures members of government face. As Donovan (1993) notes, this is not only a symptom of rural areas. In fact, community controversy is found to act as a mediating effect in the adoption of economic development policies in southern California communities. Donovan recommends future research in the direction of the "individual-level" foundations of discontent and how they "generate a context of controversy within a community, and how is it that officials come to perceive this controversy and respond to it" (1993:400).

What are some of the costs to small communities for having high levels of social capital? What are some of the downsides of social capital? Whereas Coleman and Putnam once both opined that high or strong social capital necessarily led to affirmative outcomes, this claim has been challenged by a number of critics (Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996; 2000; Wacquant, 1997; Schulman and Anderson, 1999). These critics point out the development of negative effects associated with high levels of social capital. This research provides further support for their claims and suggests that in the course of particular community development projects, namely those characterized by controversy, the type of event plays a mediating role in the outcome of the project.

One of the downsides of social capital relates to the exclusion not only of certain *actors* in the course of cooperative community ventures as Portes and Landolt (1996) point out, but the exclusion of certain *actions*—specifically, those which jeopardize community cohesion. In the case of Meadville's bike trail project, the government, trusted for its responsiveness and incorporation of citizen complaints into decision-making, found itself

split among two groups with very divergent viewpoints on the trail issue. It found it could no longer sustain a precarious position in the middle precisely because politics became so personalized, a consequence of close ties. And the community was unable to function knowing that its social capital resources were dwindling as a result of the controversy. The government responded in kind by scrambling to preserve the social capital stockpile, an act that would eventually become the downfall of the bike trail project.

By avoiding this controversy, Meadville discovered a short-term solution to a pressing issue, an act that effectively protected a commonly held value. Part of the quality of life residents recognize in the community are their ties and connections to each other, and their ability to rely on each other in times of need. Those relationships are crucial elements to their quality of life. The provision of recreational amenities based on economic incentives that endanger those relationships are an unacceptable replacement for the comfort and security those relationships provide. However, while social cohesion is preserved, the community incurs other costs. These include missing out on 1) the opportunity to learn cooperation techniques and conflict management, 2) the chance to enhance the community's long-term viability in the form of establishing diverse local attractions and amenities that are not harmful to the environment, and 3) establishing extra-local ties through the experience of applying for (and perhaps receiving) outside funds to create an internally identified and motivated recreational need. As the Virden, Illinois case study team discovered, "Social capital, in a community that works, can facilitate planning, but the consensus arrived at points up negative aspects of trust and cooperation in the long-term" (Salamon et al., 1998:232). Certainly a lesson to be learned from the case of Meadville is that success is differentially defined. While it can be linked with action (implementation), success can also be distinctly associated with inaction that preserves the social fabric of a community. However, the term "success" can also apply not to outcomes, but processes through which communities arrive at public decisions.

It is therefore important to a variety of people with an interest in rural policy to gain insight into the local progression and justifications for employing informal processes rather than formal policy to plan for the future, not only for the sake of outcomes, but for process

as well. Effectively characterizing the social terrain in close-knit rural communities and recognizing what direction process takes within that context are important in understanding the failure of controversial community development issues. The very traits that make high social capital communities strong may also serve to weaken them. High social capital in itself can therefore become its own impediment to controversial types of community development projects. Therein lies both the problem and the paradox.

Qualitative and quantitative research can effectively address this paradox. The community level measure of social capital in the RDI study through the use of quantitative methods helped identify a community with an overall high level of social capital. Furthermore, it accurately captured the prevalent social norms that encourage individuals to behave on behalf of the collective. Yet at the same time, it also failed to identify the precise conditions that allow residents to sometimes push aside such norms. The RDI study also did not recognize some of the pockets of social capital that exist in the community that were identified by the NRI study.

Another finding this research reveals is the effect these differential levels of social capital have on a community. The trail proponents had lower social capital than the proponents. This was indicated by less participation of opponents in community social life through their meager involvement in formal organizations and their thin friendship networks. Since it is argued in this thesis that social capital is the cause not the consequence of collective action, it follows that opponents blocked the cooperation of others in the community because of their low social capital. This can be explained in terms of the lack of social pressure that could have urged them to act on behalf of the collective conscience since they had few links with others who could socialize them according to the prevalent community norm. We might then reason that social capital can be too low among certain groups.

On the same taken, social capital can be too high as it was among trail proponents. Social capital levels that are too high can inhibit public support for a project because of the various social pressures individuals feel with multiplex responsibilities. Although this does not occur in all cases, pressures can immobilize support when an issue generates significant

opposition or controversy in the community. This occurs despite the prevalent prescriptive norm that encourages residents to act on behalf of the collective good and is contrary to expectations that social capital will triumph invariably. But at what expense to the individual?

Thus, it seems that social capital can be both too high and too low when it concerns controversial development projects occurring in a close-knit rural community. The implication is that we need to build social capital of groups that lack it, but not the social capital of other groups where it can be detrimental. Why build the social capital of the proponents when its abundance proved to be the downfall of their cause? There seems to be an appropriate balance conducive to community development. Of course, striking the right balance among the different acting groups is the real challenge. Future research should focus on the process through which low social capital communities experience controversy and how their response differs from communities with high social capital.

X. IMPLICATIONS

First and foremost, some measures of community social capital fail to recognize the variations among different groups in the community. While overall levels may be high, certain factions may still have low social capital that can effectively inhibit attempts by other community groups to implement improvement projects. Such low social capital groups need to be identified in relation to the high social capital groups. Then, attempts should be made to build the social capital among the groups with low levels. This does not mean attempting to eliminate constructive community debates that emerge from healthy disagreement. Nor is a consensually based model of community development necessarily being promoted. However, it appears that the lack of some citizens' presence in community activities may be creating a barrier for community dialogue. Thus, communities should be inclusive in their approach to incorporate these low social capital groups and individuals into a wide array of community projects that are not controversial. By creating a pattern of communication with these outgroups, when disagreement does occur, a relationship already exists to encourage a dialogue.

Can citizens actually become over-involved in community activities? And should we as rural sociologists be recommending they limit their participation? According to this research, the answer seems to be a resounding yes. The multiple public obligations and responsibilities of citizens who may be over-involved have made them over-socialized, too yielding to the collective will (Ryan, 1994).Should we really recommend that over-active citizens withdraw from community life just a little bit? Who would take up the slack? Perhaps the group of citizens that are too withdrawn. It appears that a lack of social capital is congruent with under-socialization while in some instances, at least where social tension is a factor, high social capital is associated with over-socialization, both of which act together to prevent the implementation of contoversial development projects.

What is therefore recommended is essentially a more even distribution of citizen involvement in community improvement activities. This means encouraging communities to extend invitations to citizens they can identify as not very involved to participate in

community building projects. The success of such efforts may relieve some of the over-socialization strains on over-active residents who always find themselves doing everything. Such a recommendation promotes cautious construction and redistribution of the wealth social capital can provide by making it a resource, not a drain, for rural communities seeking alternative development options in a changing farm economy.

APPENDIX A: A SUMMARY OF RELEVANT STATE/FEDERAL TRAIL LEGISLATION

I set out to determine whether Meadville's city council or even the board of supervisors could have invoked the power of eminent domain to acquire the old railroad right-of-way lands. The mere threat spelled political suicide for the mayor and despite the decision not to use it, still forced his exit from a position of leadership. The courts and condemnation are relevant to an analysis of Meadville in the sense that they represent formal, institutionalized authority that represents a force beyond the norms of local influence. The law is the law. When the courts take over, the community cannot change the process or the outcome. In the trail project, turning to the legal system was used only when informal channels failed to prove satisfactory to both parties. This occurred during the land dispute between the Cottons and the city, as well as the threat issued by the mayor to use eminent domain. Both times, however, one party caved making no use of the legal system other than for filing required paperwork. Legal decision-making is incongruous with the informal structure of the community whose autonomy is threatened by the law's disregard for local norms and traditions.

So why even include a discussion of trail legislation and condemnation in this thesis if it was not even used? As the following discussion will show, the greater political structure beyond the community of Meadville is itself torn on the issue of property rights and how they relate to the individual and the public good. Current Iowa laws set an example for local governments in addressing trail legislation. These sometimes conflicting laws serve to illustrate the broader ideological struggle between the individual and the collective by offering differential treatment of different types of landowners as it relates to recreational trail administration.

At a time when the trail was being the most fervently championed back in the latter part of 1998 and beginning of 1999, the council could probably have been able to use eminent domain to acquire all prized property according to the Iowa Attorney General's Office, Transportation Division (March, 2000). The language of Iowa Code, Section 6A.1 states: "Proceedings may be instituted and maintained by the state of Iowa...for the

condemnation of such private property as may be necessary for any public improvement..." However, a bill introduced in the Iowa State Legislature in March, 1999 challenged the inclusion of recreational trails in the category of public improvement. A cursory treatment of federal legislation regarding recreational trails will be addressed prior to introducing the specifics of Iowa's new legislation.

The National Trails System Act

The state of Iowa jumped on board the trail bandwagon after federal legislation opened the door to outdoor recreational opportunities in 1983 with the National Trails System Act or NTSA. That act essentially enables trail interest groups to secure about-to-be-abandoned railroad easements for interim trail use without providing compensation to adjacent property owners, keeping the potential open for continued rail use in the future. In this way, both trail groups and future railroad interests are protected. National security, it is argued, is also protected whose official overseers are appeased knowing they have the possibility of reopening abandoned railway corridors in the case of a national emergency.

The NTSA was passed as a result of the successful lobbying efforts of railroad industry and trail interest groups who became unlikely partners to protect both corporate interests in the railway corridors and public recreational interests. At the same time, federal security interests were satisfied making it a win-win-win situation with just one loser—notably, private landowning interests. Yet even their interests could be protected through the bureaucratic process of filing for abandonment as long as no trail interest group filed a permit to take over the abandoned rail corridor.

The process of abandoning a railway line requires the railroad company to file an intent to abandon application with the federal Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC).[11] The

[11] The ICC is a federal body created in 1887 to regulate interstate rail lines. According to the RTC (1987), it was designed to protect farmers, shippers and rural Americans from railroad monopolies. "By law, the agency is supposed to balance the railroad's goal of making a profit (and hence dropping lines that lose money) with shippers' need for transportation of their commodities" (21).

ICC, in turn, can either grant or deny the railroad's application for abandonment based on other railroad interests in the same line or after being wholly convinced the railroad can no longer be expected to keep it open while sustaining a viable profit. If the ICC approves the abandonment application, railroad companies can negotiate with trail interest groups to take over the out-of-service rail corridor until railroad interests might again need it in the future through a process called railbanking.

The NTSA allows negotiations to occur between the railroad and trail interests, which excludes adjacent property owners from the process. Such property owners may or may not hold legal title to the land depending on the type of contract granted to the railroad when it first was used for rail service. Three general types of land acquisition are typical. Originally, the land could have been acquired by the railroad through a purchase agreement, such as a "fee simple" arrangement, or it could have been sold as an easement by the property owner. Another way a railroad could (and still can) acquire land was to use the right of eminent domain. If the desired land was publicly owned, such as the right-of-way in Meadville, the railroad could receive a grant of easement from either federal, state, or local government, which, by definition, would revert back to the appropriate agency at the end of the use term. Easements are a "vested or acquired right to use land...for a specific purpose" (Montagne, 1989:5) and are accompanied by restrictions and limitations. When that specific use no longer applies as when railroads are applying for permission to abandon a line, the land automatically reverts back to the landowner. The rights entitling the original property owners to take control of the property are referred to as reversionary (property) rights. Of course, if the railroad company bought the land outright, they were free to sell it to whomever when they abandoned a line (unless another railroad company was interested in using it, at which time the ICC would handle the matter).

In the case where the railroad companies use the power of eminent domain to acquire the property for the line, they are required to "sell its interest in the property at fair market value to the adjoining property owners upon abandonment" (Iowa Code, §6A.6). However, the property in question in Meadville was not acquired by the railroad through eminent domain, but was granted as an easement for railroad purposes until such use was no longer

needed. Therefore, the railroad had no right or obligation to sell the property or quit claim deeds to adjacent landowners in Meadville once they abandoned the line.

When a railroad applies for abandonment with the ICC, a trail interest group has 180 days from that date to apply for a Certificate of Interim Trail Use (CITU), also with the ICC. Under such circumstances, the ICC steps back and allows trail groups to negotiate land prices/donations directly with the rail company. If they come to an agreement, the land is never abandoned but simply transfers into the hands of the trail interest group. All reversionary property rights are circumvented effectively excluding adjacent property owners from the process, unless of course, the interest group representing trail interests is the rightful owner as was the case of the city council in Meadville.

HR2438: Just compensation

The process of excluding adjacent landowners is currently being contested in the form of HR 2438 that was introduced in September, 1997 to the House of Representatives during the 105th National Congress. The bill, otherwise known as the Railway Abandonment Clarification Act, is an attempt to amend the NTSA by encouraging "the establishment of appropriate trails on abandoned railroad rights-of-way while ensuring the protection of certain reversionary property rights" (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997). The motivation for this legislation is to ensure that private property rights are not trampled in the process of establishing recreational trails. The sponsor of the bill, Kansas Senator Jim Ryun, testified that under the current NTSA, individual property rights are suspended by making allowances for special interest groups to "use private land for public purposes without providing due process or compensation for property owners...These landowners are completely denied...[participation] in the decision-making process with regard to how the trail will be developed on their property" (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998:8). According to Ryun's testimony, much of railbanked land "actually belongs to private landowners" (1998:8) although he provides no evidence for this claim. In response to my request for the status of the bill, a reply from his office stated that HR 2438 was referred to the House Committee on Resources where it never made it out of committee. As "a strong

supporter of private property rights" and one who is "against the unconstitutional taking permitted by the Trails Act" (Letter of Correspondence, April 17, 2000), Ryun responded by introducing a similar bill, HR 4086, in March, 2000. Again the bill is in committee. What Ryun is also proposing is to put property decision-making power in regard to the National Systems Trails Act into state rather than federal hands to avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach with little or no application to the varied and unique cases facing landowners with property adjacent to out-of-service rail lines. "I will continue to support any legislation that restricts Federal mandates and protects the rights of private property owners" (Letter of correspondence, April 17, 2000). Although the question in Meadville is not about just compensation, it is about the moral right of a government agency acting on behalf of a nebulous public to disregard private claims to property. And like the national debate, the one in Meadville was hotly contested.

The land ownership debates occurring at the federal level represent the deep cleft between those on the side of private property rights and those representing public interests. Like the rest of the nation, Iowa also struggles with these debates as the case of Meadville illustrates. Iowa has itself enacted a program to implement its own Statewide Trails Development Program (STDP). The program provides a recreational platform where multilateral cooperation can occur among different state government agencies, including Iowa Departments of Transportation (IDOT), Natural Resources, Economic Development, and Cultural Affairs. As it is outlined in Iowa Code, Section 456B, IDOT is the primary administrative body for the STDP and has as its goal to meet long-term objectives for "the acquisition, development, promotion, and management of recreation trails throughout the state."

HF 476: Redefining private development

About the time the trail was being considered in Meadville, the Iowa General Assembly was gearing up to pass new trail legislation in the form of House File 476, a bill signed into law in May, 1999. Among other things, what HF 476 set out to do was limit state and local governments' use of eminent domain to acquire agricultural land for "private

development purposes" (Edelman, 1999). Eminent domain, "the power to take private property for a public purpose" (Montagne, 1989:6), can be invoked by the Iowa Department of Transportation for the purpose of such public improvements like roads, which are arguably for the greater public good.

It would seem to the casual observer, in consideration of the definition of eminent domain, that HF 476 is merely a redundant bill reiterating what is already law. Of course state and local governments cannot invoke the power of eminent domain for private development purposes. However, what the Iowa State Legislature did with the passage of HF 476 was redefine "private development" in regard to trails and agricultural land.

According to Section 6A.21, "private development" refers to "the construction of, or improvement related to, recreational trails, recreational development paid for primarily with private funds, housing and residential development, or commercial or industrial enterprise development." At first glance, it appears that the code is referring only to recreational trails, like recreational development, that is "paid for primarily with private funds." Not so. All recreational trails despite their primary funding source are dubiously relegated to the category of "private development." Furthermore,

> "public use" or "public purpose" or "public improvement" does not include the authority to condemn agricultural land for private development purposes unless the owner of the agricultural land consents to the condemnation. (Iowa Code, §6A.21.1a)

Only in cases of consent and negotiated purchase can the right of eminent domain be used. "Public purpose" does not include the authority to condemn agricultural land for recreational trails unless the owner consents. Since part of the proposed trail in Meadville was planned through a 20-acre cow pasture used for the care and feeding of livestock, condemnation could not have been used for that section if the landowner would have objected, and she did.

One of the issues that arises as a result of HF 476 is the fact that it protects the property rights of a certain group of citizens (agricultural land owners) making them exempt from the consequences of eminent domain while failing to extend the same rights to other citizens or property owners (Edelman, 1999). This is particularly relevant to Meadville and

the city council's legal right to condemn some lands but not others (defined as those used for agriculture [12]) along the proposed trail route.

Another related problem with HF 476 is its contradictory use of the definition of private and public development. By passing it into law, the state of Iowa managed to redefine recreational trail development as private development use in agricultural land condemnation proceedings, but as public development for non-agricultural land condemnation. Furthermore, if recreational trails fall under the purview of "private development" in certain instances, how can federal and state dollars be allocated to fund such projects? Such a contradiction and its application in Iowa law brings into question the purpose of state government in relation to property issues, revealing the broader challenges facing recreational trail projects. To some extent, the law also disregards federal law with which the predominantly agricultural state does not necessarily agree in the NTSA's approach to eliminating reversionary property rights. In line with Miller's (1986) contentions that protecting individual rights is to act in the public good, this legislative event provides a contemporary and local example of the distinctly American approach to public policy regarding decisions about private property rights.

---

[12] Agricultural land is defined as "real property owned by a person in tracts of ten acres or more...that has been used for the production of agricultural commodities during three out of the past five years" (Iowa Code § 6A.21 [1] [a]). The pasture land that lay along the potential trail site consisted of a 20-acre plot according to an interview with the owner/resident.

APPENDIX B: NRI FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Iowa State University

A Study of Citizen Participation in Rural Communities

June 1999

Respondent Name _____ Date _____

Community _____

Interviewer _____

Hello, my name is _____. I'm a member of the Iowa State University Research Team you may have read about in the [redacted]. The research I am involved in is being conducted to help us better understand the role of citizen participation in Iowa's rural communities. It's part of a larger university program called Iowa's Rural Development Initiative that began back in 1994 when one rural community from each of Iowa's 99 counties was chosen to participate in a study. [redacted] was chosen from [redacted] County. Perhaps you remember the survey conducted through your county extension office? That was the beginning of the Rural Development Initiative.

This year, with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, we've chosen [redacted] of the original 99 communities to visit and find out more about recent community projects or events. We are talking to several people like yourself to better understand who participates in community projects, why they get involved, and what happens as a result of their involvement. Eventually, we hope the lessons you and others have learned will be shared with communities throughout the state through cooperative extension.

All the information you and others provide will be strictly confidential. We ask your permission to tape our discussion for the simple reason of accuracy. However, none of what you say will be published or used in any form which would identify you as the source, nor will the names of individuals be mentioned in our findings. Of course, all tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

Depending on your level of involvement in [redacted] projects, this interview should take about half an hour.

Are there any questions you would like to ask before I begin?

Then let's begin.

A Study of Citizen Participation

1. What is it like to live in ?

2. What do you like best about living in [redacted]? Why?

3. What do you like least about living in [redacted]? Why?

4. Thinking back, what do you feel are the three most important things that have happened over the past 3 years or are currently happening that make [redacted] a better place to live?

   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____

5. Looking ahead to the next 3 years, what do you think are the three most important things which need to be done to make [redacted] a better place to live?

   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____

6. Based on a few prior interviews and on information found in the [redacted], these issues and events seem to have received widespread attention over the past 3 years. **(HAND RESPONDENT CARD A).** Please identify which of these issues or events you have been actively involved in at any time over the past 3 years. By "actively involved", I'm referring to situations where you would be recognized by other community members as someone who either supported or opposed the project by your actions or deeds.

    1. 1998 [redacted]
    2. County Wide Law Enforcement
    3. Community Owned Grocery Store [redacted]
    4. Family Resource Center
    5. Teen Center
    6. Walking/Bicycle Trail
    7. Beer Garden [redacted]

7. **IF RESPONDENT INDICATED MORE THAN 3 ISSUES:** Of the issues you mentioned, which 3 would you say you were most involved in?

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____

Name of issue _____

ISSUE 1

8. Let's discuss **ISSUE 1** first. Describe how this became a community issue.

9. As you recall, what individuals initiated or first became involved with this issue? **(PUT THESE NAMES ON MASTER NOMINATION LIST)**:

10. What organizations first became involved with this issue?

11. Concerning organizations, which of the following best represents how **ISSUE** was handled? **(SHOW RESPONDENT UNNAMED CARD)**

    1. There was consensus from the beginning.
    2. There were many points of view expressed
    3. There were two clearly defined sides which were in opposition.

    IF ANSWERED 2 or 3, THEN ASK...

    4. How were these differences resolved?

12. On a scale from 1 to 10, rate the extent you think all information about **ISSUE** was openly exchanged among [redacted] residents and groups. Use 1 to indicate very restricted exchange and 10 to indicate completely open exchange with numbers in between representing degrees of restricted or open exchange. _____

13. Using the same scale, rate the amount of community-wide involvement that existed with this issue. In this case, use 1 to indicate virtually no community-wide involvement was evident and 10 to indicate total community-wide involvement. _____

14. Please indicate whether or not each of the following occurred during the time **ISSUE** was being discussed.

	Yes	No	DK
1. This issue impacted the outcomes of city elections.....	1	2	3
2. This issue was mostly debated in the "coffee shops" rather than discussed in a formal setting.	1	2	3
3. This issue led to permanent divisions in [redacted].....	1	2	3

15. Which one of the following (**SHOW CARD B**) best describes the role of the local newspaper in this issue?

    1. It reported all sides (pros and cons) of **ISSUE**
    2. It reported only one side of **ISSUE**
    3. It did not report this issue
    4. There was only one side to **ISSUE**

16. Now, let's turn to your personal involvement. To begin, have you been in support of or opposed to **ISSUE**?

17. Please describe the various roles you played that were relevant to **ISSUE. [OTHER ROLES YOU PLAYED?]**

18. Would you say your involvement in **ISSUE** was voluntary or was it more a matter of occupational, organizational, or other commitments that required you to become involved?

    1. Voluntary – **GO TO 18A & B**
    2. Involuntary – **GO TO 18C**

IF VOLUNTARY:

18a. Why did you first become involved in **ISSUE**?

18b. Now we want to know who, if anyone, got you involved and whether those individuals themselves are involved in **ISSUE**. **(NAMES <u>OF THOSE ACTIVELY INVOLVED</u> GO ON MASTER LIST)**

Name of individual	How did they get you involved?	Actively involved?
		Yes No
		Yes No
		Yes No
		Yes No
		Yes No

IF INVOLUNTARY:

18c. Specifically, what were the commitments **[ORG., OCCUP., ETC]** that required your involvement in **ISSUE**?

19. Did you help get anyone else involved?

1. Yes – **GO TO 19a**
2. No – **GO TO 20**

19a. We will now be asking you who these individuals are and how you helped get them involved? **(NAMES GO ON MASTER LIST)**

Name of individual	How did you get this individual involved?

20. As you recall, besides yourself and others you've already mentioned, who else from in or around [redacted] has been actively involved in **ISSUE**? I am wondering about those who may have either supported or opposed the issue, and whose actions would be recognized by others who have been involved in this issue. **(NAMES GO ON MASTER LIST)**

AT THIS TIME, HAND RESPONDENT THE MASTER LIST.

21. Overall you've mentioned the people on this list as being actively involved in **ISSUE**. Are there any others you have not mentioned? If so, could you please write their names on this list?

Now, I am going to ask you a few questions about the individuals on this list. Would you please circle the "Y" in the box corresponding to the appropriate response to the following questions.

22. Of these individuals, who have you had the most contact with concerning **ISSUE**?

23. Of these individuals and including yourself, which one or ones had the greatest influence on the decisions made concerning **ISSUE**?

24. Who, if any, opposed the issue?

25. With which, if any, of these individuals have you had close business or professional contact? By "professional or business contact" I mean those with whom you frequently communicate concerning business or professional matters.

26. Do you or have you over the past 3 years served on the same board of directors with any of these individuals?

27. If yes, which board(s) did both of you serve on?

END OF USING MASTER LIST!!!!!!!!

28. We've been discussing individuals from in and around [redacted] who were actively involved with **ISSUE**. Did others not from this area also play an active role?

1. Yes – **GO TO 29**
2. No – **GO TO 30**

29. We would like to know who they were and the nature of their involvement with **ISSUE.**

Name	Nature of involvement

30. Do you have anything to add about **ISSUE** that we haven't yet discussed?

[redacted]

The next set of questions are about personal friendships, that is, people you trust and depend on most for companionship. Please do NOT include individuals with whom you live. However, they may be relatives or non-relatives who live in [redacted] elsewhere. I'll be asking several questions about each of your close friends, so please give me their first and last names so I can refer to them by name.

33. What is the name of your closest friend? **(WRITE IN 1st ROW.)**
34. Who else would you consider a close friend? **(WRITE NAMES IN ORDER BELOW.)**
35. Now thinking about these close friends, do you feel equally close to all of them or are you closer to some than others?
    1. Close to all of them **(GO TO 37)**
    2. Closer to some than others **(GO TO 36)**
36. Who do you feel especially close to? Is it _____**(IF THEY PAUSE, MENTION EACH FRIEND AND CIRCLE THE NUMBER IN THE NAME COLUMN BELOW IF YES.)**?
37. Now I'd like to find out a little bit about each close friend. Let's begin with _____**(FIRST NAME)**....

Name of Friend (First and Last)	About how long have you known each other?	Sex	Are you related to _____? (If no, skip to) →	How are you related to ____?	Where does _____ live?	In general, how active would you say ___is in [redacted] projects? 1. More involved than you 2. Less involved than you 3. About the same	On average, do you speak with _____? 1. almost every day 2. at least once a week 3. at least once a month 4. less than once a month	About how often, on average, do you and _____ get together for companionship? 1. Almost every day 2. At least once a week 3. At least once a month 4. Less than once a month
1.		M F	Yes No					
2.		M F	Yes No					
3.		M F	Yes No					
4.		M F	Yes No					
5.		M F	Yes No					
6.		M F	Yes No					

38. Now, please think about the relations between your **(NUMBER OF FRIENDS IN TABLE)** close friends. From your knowledge, are all of them acquainted with each other?

    1. Yes (Skip to 40)
    2. No

39. I would like to find out which of your close friends know each other. Do _____**(#1 NAME)** and _____**(#2 NAME)** know each other? **WRITE NAMES, IN ORDER, BOTH ACROSS THE TOP OF THE TABLE AND ALONG THE SIDE. IF #1 AND #2 KNOW EACH OTHER, PUT "Y" FOR YES. IF THEY DO NOT KNOW EACH OTHER, MARK "N" FOR NO IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX.**

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

40. Which of the following best describes how important public decisions are normally made in [redacted] **(SHOW RESPONDENT CARD C)**

1. [redacted] pretty much run by a small, close-knit group of citizens whose influence spans across almost every important public decision.
2. [redacted]sists of several small, close-knit groups of citizens whose influence varies depending on the public issue under consideration
3. [redacted] no small, close-knit group or groups that consistently influence public decision. In other words, decision making in [redacted] is widespread among many different citizens.

The following questions will ask you to identify certain individuals in the community. We will be asking for their name, occupation, and gender. **(IF RETIRED, GET PREVIOUS MAIN OCCUPATION)**

41. Who are the four people in [redacted] most effective in implementing community projects?

Name	Occupation	Sex
1._____	_____	M F
2._____	_____	M F
3._____	_____	M F
4._____	_____	M F

42. Who would you say are the four individuals most effective in representing the community of [redacted] the outside?

Name	Occupation	Sex
1._____	_____	M F
2._____	_____	M F
3._____	_____	M F
4._____	_____	M F

43. If a project was before [redacted], please list up to five people whose support would be essential for the project to succeed.

Name	Occupation	Sex
1.		M F
2.		M F
3.		M F
4.		M F
5.		M F

44. Who are the three people most effective in stopping projects?

Name	Occupation	Sex
1.		M F
2.		M F
3.		M F

That concludes our questions. Thank you very much for your time. We want to let you know that we may be contacting you again for another component of our research. We will be providing the results of our research in the form of a community presentation sometime in the future.

Would you like a report of the results of this study? **IF YES, ASK THEM TO WRITE NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER HERE.**

Again, thanks so much.

APPENDIX C: NRI DEMOGRAPHIC INSTRUMENT

Iowa State University

A Study of Citizen Participation in Rural Communities

ID Number

This short survey will allow us to update the 1994 study of that was conducted as part of the Iowa's Rural Development Initiative. A few background questions are also included so that we can make certain that a representative sample of citizens have been included in this update. The information you provide will be strictly confidential and never used or associated with your name.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

A. Where do you live? ***(Circle your answer.)***

1. Within city limits
2. Outside city limits, on a farm
3. Outside city limits, not on a farm

How many miles do you live from _____ miles

B. How long have you lived in the area? _____ years

C. Where did you live before living in _____

D. How large was that community? _____

E. Do you stay MOSTLY IN to acquire the following services, or do you go MOSTLY OUTSIDE OF ? Please circle the appropriate number for each service.

	Mostly In Home Community	Mostly Outside Home Community	Do Not Use/ Purchase
a. Primary health care.....	1	2	3
b. Specialized health care.....	1	2	3
c. Shopping for daily needs.....	1	2	3
d. Shopping for "big ticket" items	1	2	3
e. Recreation/entertainment.....	1	2	3
f. Church.....	1	2	3

F. Here is a list of things people have said may pose a threat to the future of small communities. Please indicate if you feel each of the following DOESN'T THREATEN, SOMEWHAT THREATENS or SEVERELY THREATENS the future of

	Doesn't Threaten	Somewhat Threatens	Severely Threatens	Don't Know
a. Lack of jobs	1	2	3	4
b. Quality of schools	1	2	3	4
c. Increase in crime	1	2	3	4
d. Loss of family farms	1	2	3	4
e. Closing of small businesses	1	2	3	4
f. Indifference about the community	1	2	3	4
g. Lack of leadership	1	2	3	4
h. Failure of people to work together	1	2	3	4
i. Loss of community spirit	1	2	3	4

G. Rate as a place to live by indicating whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements by circling the appropriate numbers.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Most everyone in is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to	1	2	3	4	5
b. When something needs to get done in the whole community usually gets behind it	1	2	3	4	5
c. Community clubs and organizations are interested in what is best for all residents	1	2	3	4	5
d. Residents in are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions	1	2	3	4	5
e. If I feel like just talking, I usually can find someone in to talk to	1	2	3	4	5
f. People living in are willing to accept people from different racial and ethnic groups	1	2	3	4	5
g. Differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in	1	2	3	4	5
h. If I called a city office here with a complaint, I would likely get a quick response	1	2	3	4	5

H. About what proportion of the adults living in would you say you know by name?

1. None or very few of them
2. Less than half of them
3. About half of them
4. Most of them
5. All of them

I. About what proportion of all your close personal adult *friends* live in ?

1. I really have no close personal friends
2. None of them live here
3. Less than one-half of them live here
4. About one-half of them live here
5. Most of them live here
6. All of them live here

J. About what proportion of your adult *relatives and in-laws* (other than very distantly related persons) live in

1. I have no living relatives or in-laws
2. None of them live here
3. Less than one-half of them live here
4. About one-half of them live here
5. Most of them live here
6. All of them live here

K. Some people care a lot about feeling part of the community they live in. For others, the community is not so important. How important is it to you to feel part of the community?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Little or no importance

L. In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in local community improvement activities and events?

1. Very active
2. Somewhat active
3. Not very active
4. Not at all active

M. How interested are you in knowing what goes on in ?

1. Very interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. Neither interested nor disinterested
4. Not interested

N. Suppose for some reason you had to move away from ? How sorry or pleased would you be to leave?

1. Very sorry to leave
2. Somewhat sorry to leave
3. It wouldn't make any difference one way or the other
4. Somewhat pleased to leave
5. Very pleased to leave

O. Imagine a scale for each pair of words listed below. For the first pair, 1 on the scale indicates totally friendly and 7 indicates totally unfriendly. The numbers in between (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) are degrees of friendliness. For each pair of words, please circle one number which best describes :

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly
Dangerous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Safe
Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indifferent
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Boring
Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tolerant
Rejecting of new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Open to new ideas
Trusting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not trusting
Well-kept	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Run down

P. Using a 1-10 scale with 1 being the lowest possible rating and 10 the highest possible rating, please rate citizens on each of these characteristics.

1. Can be counted on to step forward to serve as community volunteers _____
2. Are willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of the community _____
3. Share a common vision of what future should be like _____
4. Hold basic values where support of the community is expected of everyone _____
5. Can be counted on to speak favorably about _____

Q. How would you rate for its performance in the following areas?

1. Provides an attractive climate for local businesses _____
2. Provides an attractive climate for citizens _____
3. Encourages citizens to play an active role in local governmental issues _____
4. Shows concern for those who are disadvantaged _____
5. Characterized by close-knit neighborhoods _____

In the table below, different types of organizations and associations are listed in which people frequently participate. For each type, please write in the name of organizations in which you have held membership at any time over the last 3 years. Then, for each organization you list, answer the questions listed across the top portion of the table by circling the appropriate response.

NOTE: Please list any organizations, groups or associations which you have belonged to over the past 3 years, even if you think your membership in the group is unimportant.

Name of organization?	Have you been an officer or member of its Board of Directors in past 3 years?		IF OFFICER OR BOARD MEMBER: At what level was your position?					
Service and fraternal organizations (such as Lions, Kiwanis, Eastern Star)								
1.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
2.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
3.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
Recreational groups (softball, bowling, card clubs)								
1.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
2.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
3.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
Political and civic groups (PTA, PEO, historical groups, local development organizations)								
1.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
2.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
3.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
Job-related organizations (labor unions, professional associations)								
1.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
2.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
3.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
Church groups (church committees, Bible study)								
1.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
2.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National
3.	Yes	No	Local	County	Multicounty	State	Multistate	National

Finally, we need to ask a few questions about your background and past experiences. This information, as with all information provided in this survey, will be used for statistical analysis only and will remain strictly confidential.

A. Your age (as of last birthday)? _____ years

B. Your sex?

1. Male
2. Female

C. Which best describes you?

1. African American
2. Asian
3. Hispanic/Latino
4. Native American/American Indian
5. White
6. Other _____

D. What is your current marital status?

1. Married
2. Divorced/Separated
3. Never married
4. Widowed

E. What is your highest level of formal education attained?

1. Less than 9th grade
2. 9th to 12 grade, no diploma
3. High school graduate (includes equivalency)
4. Some college, no degree
5. Associate degree
6. Bachelors degree
7. Graduate or professional degree

F. Do you own or rent your current residence?

1. Own
2. Rent
3. Have some other arrangement

G. How many people, including yourself, live in your household? _____ persons

H. How many of the people living in your household are under 18 years of age? ***(Write in "0" if none)***

_____ persons

I. What is your religious affiliation? _____

J. Your present employment status?

1. Employed or self-employed on a **full-time** basis
2. Employed or self-employed on a **part-time** basis
3. Retired
4. Full-time homemaker
5. Student
6. Unemployed

Please list your primary occupation

Occupation _____

Community where employed _____

Miles traveled to work (one-way) _____ miles

List second occupation (if any) _____

Overall satisfaction with your present employment situation *(circle your answer)*

1. Very satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied.
3. Somewhat dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied

K. To be answered if you are presently married:

What is your spouse's present employment status? ***(Circle your answer.)***

1. Employed or self-employed on a **full-time** basis
2. Employed or self-employed on a **part-time** basis
3. Retired
4. Full-time homemaker
5. Student
6. Unemployed

Please list his/her primary occupation

Occupation _____

Community where employed _____

Miles traveled to work (one-way) _____ miles

L. What was your approximate gross household income from all sources, before taxes, for 1998?

1. $9,999 or less
2. $10,000-19,999
3. $20,000-29,999
4. $30,000-39,999
5. $40,000-49,999
6. $50,000-59,999
7. $60,000-74,999
8. $75,000 or more

Thanks for your cooperation!!!

If you have any additional comments, please use the back page.

APPENDIX D: RDI INSTRUMENT

(Comm Name) Community Study

I. Place of Residence

The first set of questions is about where you now live and where you've lived in the past.

A. Where do you live? *(Circle your answer.)*

atlast4	vrcomm	
var002	v2in	1. Within city limits
	v2farm	2. Outside city limits of (Comm Name), on a farm
	v2out	3. Outside city limits of (Comm Name), not on a farm

atlast4	vrcomm		
var003	-------	B.	**How many miles do you live from (Comm Name)?** _____ miles
var004	-------	C.	**What community other than (Comm Name) do you live closest to?** _____
var005	-------	D.	**How many miles do you live from this community?** _____ miles

E. Have you ever lived in or around (that is, on a farm or rural nonfarm) the following sized communities? *(Circle your answers.)*

atlast4a	vrcomm		Yes	No
var006	v6	a. Less than 500 population	1	2
var007	v7	b. 500-2,499 population	1	2
var008	v8	c. 2,500-9,999 population	1	2
var009	v9	d. 10,000-49,999 population	1	2
var010	v10	e. 50,000 to 249,999 population	1	2
var011	v11	f. 250,000 or more	1	2

F. People have different reasons for living in a particular community. Circle the THREE MOST IMPORTANT reasons why you live in (Comm Name). *(Circle three only.)*

atlast4a	vrcomm		
var012	rsn1	1.	Grew up there
var013	rsn2	2	Close to relatives/in-laws
var013	rsn3	3.	Friendliness of people
	rsn4	4.	Close to job
	rsn5	5.	Affordable housing
	rsn6	6.	Scenic area
	rsn7	7.	Safe area
	rsn8	8.	Strong school system
	rsn9	9.	Medical services available
	rsn10	10.	Good leadership
	rsn11	11.	Low property taxes
	rsn12	12.	Can't afford to leave
	rsn13	13.	Take care of aging relatives
	rsn14	14.	Other (Specify)_____
	rsn15	15.	Other (Specify)_____

II. Community Services and Facilities

A. Please rate the overall quality of services and facilities located in (Comm Name).

atlast4	vrcomm		
nv015	v15vg	1.	Very good
	v15g	2.	Good
	v15f	3.	Fair
	v15p	4.	Poor
	-------	5.	Don't know
	v15m		Mean

B. Please rate each of the following services/facilities by circling the appropriate numbers. Circle 8 if a particular service is not available in (Comm Name).

atlast4	vrcomm		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Dont Know	Not Available	Mean
			__vg	__g	__f	__p	---------	__na	__m
nv016	v16...	a Jobs	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv017	v17...	b. Medical services	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv018	v18...	c Public schools	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv019	v19...	d. Shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv020	v20...	e. Adequate housing	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv021	v21...	f. Recreation/entertainment	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv022	v22...	g. Child care services	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv023	v23...	h. Senior citizen programs	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv024	v24...	i Programs for youth	1	2	3	4	5	8	

C. Do you stay MOSTLY IN YOUR HOME COMMUNITY to acquire the following services, or do you go MOSTLY OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME COMMUNITY? Please circle the appropriate numbers for each of the services.

atlast4	vrcomm		Mostly In Home Community	Mostly Outside Home Community	Do Not Use/ Purchase
			__i	__o	__n
var025	v25...	a. Primary health care	1	2	3
var026	v26...	b. Specialized health care	1	2	3
var027	v27...	c. Shopping for daily needs	1	2	3
var028	v28...	d. Shopping for "big ticket" items	1	2	3
var029	v29...	e. Recreation/entertainment	1	2	3
var030	v30...	f. Church		2	3

D. Please rate the following GOVERNMENT services available in (Comm Name).

atlast4	vrcomm		Government Services	Very Good __vg	Good __g	Fair __f	Poor __p	Don't Know __dk	Do Not Receive Service __na	Mean __m
nv031	v31...	a.	Police protection	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv032	v32...	b.	Condition of streets	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv033	v33...	c.	Condition of parks	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv034	v34...	d.	Water	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv035	v35...	e.	Fire protection	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv036	v36...	f.	Garbage collection	1	2	3	4	5	8	
nv037	v37...	g.	Emergency response service	1	2	3	4	5	8	

E. How would you rate the overall quality of GOVERNMENT services in (Comm Name)?

atlast4	vrcomm		
nv038	v38vg	1.	Very good
	v38g	2.	Good
	v38f	3.	Fair
	v38p	4.	Poor
	v38dk	5.	Don't know
	v39m		Mean

F. Here is a list of things people have said may pose a threat to the future of small communities. Please indicate if you feel each of the following DOESN'T THREATEN, SOMEWHAT THREATENS or SEVERELY THREATENS the future of (Comm Name).

atlast4	vrcomm			Doesn't Threaten __no	Somewhat Threatens __so	Severely Threatens __se	Don't Know ------	Mean __m
var039	v39...	a.	Lack of jobs	1	2	3	4	
var040	v40...	b.	Quality of schools	1	2	3	4	
var041	v41...	c.	Increase in crime	1	2	3	4	
var042	v42...	d.	Increase in the number of single parent families	1	2	3	4	
var043	v43...	e.	Loss of family farms	1	2	3	4	
var044	v44...	f.	Closing of small businesses	1	2	3	4	
var045	v45...	g.	Indifference about the community	1	2	3	4	
var046	v46...	h.	Lack of leadership	1	2	3	4	
var047	v47...	i.	Failure of people to work together	1	2	3	4	
var048	v48...	j.	Loss of community spirit	1	2	3	4	
var049	v49...	k.	Increase in number of homes where both parents work outside the home	1	2	3	4	
var050	v50...	l.	People moving out of the community...	1	2	3	4	
var 51	v51...	m.	People moving into the community.....	1	2	3	4	

III. Attitudes About Community

A. Rate (Comm Name) as a place to live by indicating whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements by circling the appropriate numbers.

_ist4qj vrcomm			Strongly Agree __sa	Agree __a	Undecided __u	Disagree __d	Strongly Disagree __sd	Mean __m
nv052	v52...	a. Most everyone in (Comm Name) is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to	1	2	3	4	5	
nv053	v53...	b. Being a resident of (Comm Name) is like living with a group of close friends	1	2	3	4	5	
nv054	v54...	c. When something needs to get done in (Comm Name), the whole community usually gets behind it	1	2	3	4	5	
nv055	v55...	d. If you do not look out for yourself, no one else in (Comm Name) will	1	2	3	4	5	
nv056	v56...	e. I am trusted by the people in (Comm Name) who know me	1	2	3	4	5	
nv057	v57...	f. Community clubs and organizations are interested in what is best for all residents	1	2	3	4	5	
)58	v58...	g. Residents in (Comm Name) are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions	1	2	3	4	5	
nv059	v59...	h. If I feel like just talking, I usually can find someone in (Comm Name) to talk to	1	2	3	4	5	
nv060	v60...	i. If I had an emergency, even people I don't know would help out	1	2	3	4	5	
nv061	v61...	j. People living in (Comm Name) are willing to accept people from different racial and ethnic groups	1	2	3	4	5	
nv062	v62...	k. I think that "every person for themselves" is a good description of how people in (Comm Name) act	1	2	3	4	5	
nv063	v63...	l. Differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in (Comm Name)	1	2	3	4	5	
nv064	v64...	m. If I called a city office here with a complaint, I would likely get a quick response	1	2	3	4	5	
nv065	v65...	n. Overall, (Comm Name) has more things going for it than other communities of similar size	1	2	3	4	5	

B. About what proportion of the adults living in (Comm Name) would you say you know by name?

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
var066	v66.1	1.	None or very few of them
	v66.2	2.	Less than half of them
	v66.3	3.	About half of them
	v66.4	4.	Most of them
	v66.5	5.	All of them
	v66m		Mean

C. About what proportion of all your close personal adult *friends* live in (Comm Name)?

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
var067	v67.1	1.	I really have no close personal friends
	v67.2	2.	None of them live here
	v67.3	3.	Less than one-half of them live here
	v67.4	4.	About one-half of them live here
	v67.5	5.	Most of them live here
	v67.6	6.	All of them live here
	v67m		Mean

D. About what proportion of your adult *relatives and in-laws* (other than very distantly related persons) live in (Comm Name)?

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
var068	v68.1	1.	I have no living relatives or in-laws
	v68.2	2.	None of them live here
	v68.3	3.	Less than one-half of them live here
	v68.4	4.	About one-half of them live here
	v68.5	5.	Most of them live here
	v68.6	6.	All of them live here
	v68m		Mean

E. In general, do you prefer communities where people feel comfortable dropping in on each other without notice, or where they wait for an invitation before visiting, or where people pretty much go their own way with little contact with each other?

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
nv069	v69.1	1.	Drop in without notice
	v69.2	2.	Wait for an invitation
	v69.3	3.	Go their own way
	v69m	4.	Mean

F. What about (Comm Name)? Would you describe it as a community where people feel comfortable dropping in on each other without notice, or where they wait for an invitation before visiting, or where people pretty much go their own way with little contact with each other?

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
nv070	v70.1	1.	Drop in without notice
	v70.2	2.	Wait for an invitation
	v70.3	3.	Go their own way
	v70m		Mean

G. Some people care a lot about feeling part of the community they live in. For others, the community is not so important. How important is it to you to feel part of the community?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*		
nv071	**v71.1**	1.	Very important
	v71.2	2.	Somewhat important
	v71.3	3.	Little or no importance
	V71M		Mean

H. During the past year, have you participated in any community improvement project in (Comm Name) such as a volunteer project or fund-raising effort?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*		
nv072	**v72.1**	1.	Yes
	v72.2	2.	No
	v72.3	3.	Don't know/Uncertain

I. In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in local community improvement activities and events?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*		
nv073	**v73.1**	1.	Very active
	v73.2	2.	Somewhat active
	v73.3	3.	Not very active
	v73.4	4.	Not at all active
	v73m		Mean

J. How interested are you in knowing what goes on in (Comm Name)?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*	
nv074	**v74.1**	1. Very interested
	v74.2	2. Somewhat interested
	v74.3	3. Neither interested nor disinterested
	v74.4	4. Not interested
	v74m	Mean

K. In general, would you say you feel "at home" in (Comm Name)?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*		
nv075	**v75.1**	1.	Yes, definitely
	v75.2	2.	Yes, somewhat
	v75.3	3.	No, not much
	v75.4	4.	No, definitely not
	v75m		Mean

L. Suppose that for some reason you had to move away from (Comm Name)? How sorry or pleased would you be to leave?

atlast4w	*vrcomm*		
var076	**v76.1**	1.	Very sorry to leave
	v76.2	2.	Somewhat sorry to leave
	v76.3	3.	It wouldn't make any difference one way or the other
	v76.4	4.	Somewhat pleased to leave
	v76.5	5.	Very pleased to leave
	v76m		Mean

IV. Describing Your Community

A. Imagine a scale for each pair of words listed below. For the first pair, 1 on the scale indicates totally friendly and 7 indicates totally unfriendly. The numbers in between (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) are degrees of friendliness. For each pair of words, please circle one number which *best describes* (Comm Name).

atlast4	vrcomm		__.1	__.2	__.3	__.4	__.5	__.6	__.7	__m	
var077	v77...	Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Unfriendly
var078	v78...	Dangerous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Safe
var079	v79...	Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Indifferent
var080	v80...	Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Boring
var081	v81...	Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Tolerant
var082	v82...	Rejecting of new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Open to new ideas
var083	v83...	Trusting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Not trusting
var084	v84...	Well-kept	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		Run down

V. Neighborhood

A. How many years have you lived in your present neighborhood? _____years

atlast4	vrcomm
var085	v85a
	v85b
	v85c
	v85m

B. In the next set of questions, please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements about your NEIGHBORHOOD.

atlast4	vrcomm		Strongly Agree __sa	Agree __a	Undecided __u	Disagree __d	Strongly Disagree __sd	Mean __m
nv086	v86...	a. I can always count on my neighbors when I need help	1	2	3	4	5	
nv087	v87...	b. I don't have time to visit with my neighbors	1	2	3	4	5	
nv088	v88...	c. My neighbors can always count on me when they need help	1	2	3	4	5	
nv089	v89...	d. Our neighborhood is closely knit	1	2	3	4	5	
nv090	v90...	e. Compared to other sections of (Comm Name), my neighbors have more trust in each other	1	2	3	4	5	

C. Suppose that for some reason you had to move from your NEIGHBORHOOD into another section of (Comm Name). How would you feel?

atlast4	vrcomm		
nv091	v91.1	1.	Very sorry to leave
	v91.2	2.	Somewhat sorry to leave
	v91.3	3.	Would make no difference one way or the other
	v91.4	4.	Somewhat pleased to leave
	v91.5	5.	Very pleased to leave
	v91m		Mean

VI. Organization and Group Memberships

A. How involved are you in LOCAL groups and organizations, that is, those that hold meetings and activities in (Comm Name)? Please circle '1' if you are not involved with a particular type of group. If you do belong to any of the organizations in a category, please circle the number that indicates your level of attendance.

			Do Not Belong	Belong: Level of Attendance? Never	1-5 Times A Year	6-10 Times A Year	Once A Month	Weekly or More	Mean
atlast4q	*vrcomm*		__.1	__.2	__.3	__.4	__.5	__.6	__m
var092	v92...	a. Service and fraternal organizations (such as Lions, Kiwanis, Eastern Star)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
var093	v93...	b. Recreational groups (softball, bowling, card clubs)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
var094	v94...	c. Political and civic groups (PTA, PEO, historical groups, local development organizations)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
var095	v95...	d. Job-related organizations (labor unions, professional associations)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
var096	v96...	e. Church-related groups (church committees, Bible study groups)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
var097	v97...	f. All other groups and organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	

B. Considering ALL of the types of groups and organizations listed above, about how many *LOCAL* groups in total do you belong to?

_____groups/organizations

atlast4q	*vrcomm*
var098	v98z
	v98.1
	v98.2
	v98.3
	v98.4
	v98m

C. About how many organizations that hold meetings *OUTSIDE* of (Comm Name) do you belong to?

_____ groups/organizations

atlast4q	*vrcomm*
var099	v99z
	v99.1
	v99.2
	v99.3
	v99.4
	v99m

D. Considering your TOTAL involvement with organizations, would you say you are more involved with LOCAL ones or those OUTSIDE of (Comm Name)?

atlast4q	*vrcomm*		
var100	v100.1	1.	More involved locally
	v100.2	2.	More involved outside community
	v100.3	3.	About the same
	v100.4	4.	Don't belong to any
	v100m		Mean

VII. Background Questions

Finally, we need to ask a few questions about your background and past experiences. This information, as with all information provided in this survey, will be used for statistical analysis only and will remain strictly confidential.

A. Your age (as of last birthday)? _____ years

atlast4a	*vrcomm*
var101	v101a
	v101b
	v101c
	v101d
	v101m

B. Your sex?

atlast4a	*vrcomm*	
var102	var102	1. Male
		2. Female

C. What is your current marital status?

atlast4a	*vrcomm*		
var103	v103.1	1.	Married
	v103.2	2.	Divorced/Separated
	v103.3	3.	Never married
	v103.4	4.	Widowed

D. How long have you lived in the (Comm Name) area? _____ years

atlast4a	*vrcomm*
var104	v104a
	v104b
	v104c
	v104d
	v104m

E. Have you ever lived elsewhere?

atlast4a	*vrcomm*		
var105	v105	1.	Yes
		2.	No

F. Do you own or rent your current residence?

atlast4a	*vrcomm*		
var106	v106.1	1.	Own
	v106.2	2.	Rent
	v106.3	3.	Have some other arrangement

G. **How many people, including yourself, live in your household?** _____ persons

atlast4	*vrcomm*
var107	v107a
	v107b
	v107c
	v107d

H. **How many of the people living in your household are under 18 years of age?** *(Write in "0" if none)*

_____ persons

atlast4	*vrcomm*
var108	v108a
	v108b
	v108c
	v108d
	v108m

I. **Your highest level of formal education attained?**

atlast4	*vrcomm*		
var109	v109.1	1.	Less than 9th grade
	v109.2	2.	9th to 12 grade, no diploma
	v109.3	3.	High school graduate (includes equivalency)
	v109.4	4.	Some college, no degree
	v109.5	5.	Associate degree
	v109.6	6.	Bachelors degree
	v109.7	7.	Graduate or professional degree

J. **Your present employment status?**

atlast4q	vrcomm		
var110	v110.1	1.	Employed or self-employed on a **full-time** basis
	v110.2	2.	Employed or self-employed on a **part-time** basis
	v110.3	3	Retired
	v110.4	4	Full-time homemaker
	v110.5	5	Student
	v110.6	6	Unemployed

atlast4q	vrcomm
var111	v111.1-v111.12
var112	v112in
var113	v113m
var114	v114.1-v114.12
var115	v115.1 v115.2 v115.3 v115.4

Please list your primary occupation

Occupation _____

Community where employed _____

Miles traveled to work (one-way) _____ miles

List second occupation (if any) _____

Overall satisfaction with your present employment situation
(circle your answer)

1. Very satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied
3. Somewhat dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied

K. **To be answered if you are presently married:**

What is your spouse's present employment status?

atlast4q	vrcomm		
var116	v116.1	1.	Employed or self-employed on a **full-time** basis
	v116.2	2.	Employed or self-employed on a **part-time** basis
	v116.3	3.	Retired
	v116.4	4.	Full-time homemaker
	v116.5	5.	Student
	v116.6	6.	Unemployed

atlast4q	vrcomm
var117	v117.1- v117.12
var118	v118in
var119	v119m

Please list his/her primary occupation

Occupation _____

Community where employed _____

Miles traveled to work (one-way) _____ miles

L. **What was your approximate gross household income from all sources, before taxes, for 1993?**

atlast4q	vrcomm			
var120	v120.1	v120.5	1.	$9,999 or less
	v120.2	v120.6	2.	$10,000-19,999
	v120.3	v120.7	3.	$20,000-29,999
	v120.4	v120.8	4.	$30,000-39,999
			5.	$40,000-49,999
			6.	$50,000-59,999
			7.	$60,000-74,999
			8.	$75,000 or more

	atlast4q	vrcomm
Additional comments	var121	v121add
Requested results	var122	v122rslt

REFERENCES

Aubert, Wilhelm. 1963. "Competition and Dissensus: Two Types of Conflict and of Conflict Resolution." *Journal of Conflict Resolution.* 7(1): 26-42.

Babchuk, Nicholas and Alan Booth. 1969. "Voluntary Association Membership: A Longitudinal Analysis." *American Sociological Review.* 34(1): 31-45.

Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.* New York: Harper & Row.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp 241-258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* edited by John Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

Brown, Ralph B. and Albert B. Nylander III. 1998. "Community Leadership Structure: Differences Between Rural Community Leaders' and Residents' Informational Networks." *Journal of the Community Development Society.* 29(1): 71-89.

Brunner, Calvin R. March 1988. *Waste Age.* "NIMBYists put society at risk." Pp. 65-70.

Coleman, James S. 1957. "Community Conflict." Illinois: The Free Press.

Coleman, James S. 1966. "The Dynamics of Community Controversy." Pp. 543-557 in *Perspectives on the American Community,* edited by Roland L. Warren. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.

Coleman, James S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology.* 94(Supplement): S95-S120.

Coser, Lewis A. 1956. *The Functions of Social Conflict.* Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. 1998. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry.* Sage Publications: California.

Doherty, Susan. 1998. "Rail-Trails and Community Sentiment: A Study of Opposition to Rail-Trails and Strategies for Success." Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

Donovan, Todd. 1993. "Community Controversy and the Adoption of Economic Development Policies." *Social Science Quarterly.* 74(2): 386-402.

Edelman, Mark A. 1999. "Condemnation of Agricultural Land in Iowa?" May 6. Extension News, Iowa State University Extension, Ames, IA.

Etzioni, Amitai. 1996. "The Responsive Community: A Communitarian Perspective." *American Sociological Review*. 61(1): 1-11.

Flora, Cornelia-Butler and Jan L. Flora. 1993. "Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure: A Necessary Ingredient." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 529: 48-58.

Freeman, Linton C. 1968. *Patterns of Local Community Leadership*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc..

Galston, William A. and Karen J. Baehler. 1995. *Rural Development in the United States: Connecting Theory, Practice, and Possibilities*. Washington DC: Island Press.

Gamson, William A. and Peter H. Irons. 1961. "Community Characteristics and Fluoridation Outcome." *The Journal of Social Issues*. 17(4): 66-74.

Geolytics, Inc. CD-ROM. 1990 U.S. Census Data. New Jersey.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine Publishing Company: New York.

Gold, David. 1970. "Statistical Tests and Substantive Significance." Pp. 172-181 in *The Significance Test Controversy* edited by Denton E. Morrison and Ramon E. Henkel. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Goldberg, James F. Dec. 22, 1987. *The Boston Globe*. "Introducing GUMBY! 'Gotta Use Many Backyards'" Pg. 68.

Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology*. 91(3): 481-510.

Granovetter, Mark. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology*. 78 (6): 1360-1380.

Green, Arnold L. 1961. "The Ideology of Anti-Fluoridation Leaders." *The Journal of Social Issues*. 17(4): 13-25.

Halstead, John M., A.E. Luloff, and Sean D. Myers. 1993. "An Examination of the NIMBY Syndrome: Why Not in My Backyard?" *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 24(1): 88-102.

Horowitz, Louis Irving. 1962. "Consensus, Conflict, and Cooperation: A Sociological Inventory." *Social Forces*. 41(2): 177-188.

Inhaber, Herbert. 1998. *Slaying the NIMBY Dragon*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Iowa Attorney General's Office, Transportation Division. August 24, 2000. Telephone contact (contact person requested anonymity).

Iowa Code. <www.legis.state.ia.us/IACODE/1999SUPPLEMENT> Accessed August 18, 2000.

Iowa Code § 6A.21 (1) (b) <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/GA/78GA/BillHistory/HF/00400/HF00476.html> Accessed August 18, 2000.

Kriesberg, Louis. 1973. *The Sociology of Social Conflicts*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Kulig, Judith C. and Magda Waldner. 1999. "Lessons in Community Development: Attempting to Create a Community Wellness Centre." *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 30(1): 29-47.

Lasley, Paul, Terry Besser, Jan Flora, and Vern Ryan. 1995. *Comparing [Meadville] with Sigma (Iowa's Typical Community)*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Lyon, Larry. 1989. *The Community in Urban Society*. Massachusetts: Lexington Books.

Lynd, Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd. 1929. *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Mack, Raymond M. 1965. "The Components of Social Conflict." *Social Problems*. 12(4): 388-397.

Mann, Lawrence D. "Studies in Community Decision-Making." Pp. 39-52 in *Readings in Community Organization Practice*, edited by Ralph M. Kramer and Harry Specht. 2nd ed. 1975. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Martin, Roscoe C., Frank J. Munger, Jesse Burkhead, Guthrie S. Birkhead, Harold Herman, Herbert M. Kagi, Lewis P. Welch, and Clyde J. Wingfield. 1961. *Decisions in Syracuse: Metropolitan Action Studies, No. 1*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Massey, Rachel Ida. 1994. "Impediments to Collective Action in a Small Community." *Politics & Society*. 22 (3): 421-434.

Miller, Byron. 1992. "Collective Action and Rational Choice: Place, Community, and the Limits to Individual Self-Interest." *Economic Geography*. 68: 22-42.

Miller, Zane. 1986. "Self-Fulfillment and Decline of Civic Territorial Community." *Journal of Community Psychology*. 14: 353-364.

Mitchell, J. Clyde. 1983. "Case and Situation Analysis." *The Sociological Review*. 31: 187-211.

Montagne, Charles H. 1989. *Preserving Abandoned Railroad Rights-of-Way for Public Use: A Legal Manual*. Washington DC: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

Nash, Roderick. 1967. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Olson, Mancur. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Pondy, Louis R. "Organizational Conflict: Concepts and Models." Pp. 349-363 in *Readings in Community Organization Practice,* edited by Ralph M. Kramer and Harry Specht. 2nd ed. 1975. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Portes, Alejandro, and Patricia Landolt. 1996. "The Downside of Social Capital." *The American Prospect*. 26: 18-21, 94.

Powell, Walter W. "Trust-Based Forms of Governance." Pp. 51-67 in *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research*. Roderick M. Kramer and Tom R. Tyler, eds. 1996. California: Sage Publications.

Powers, Ronald C. 1967. "Power Actors and Social Change." (Part 1) *Journal of Cooperative Extension*. 5: 153-163.

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy*. 6(1): 65-78.

Putnam, Robert D. Nov. 14, 1998. Informal meeting at Iowa Conference of Political Scientists held at Iowa State University.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. 1987. *Converting Rails to Trails: A Citizens' Manual for Transforming Abandoned Rail Corridors into Multipurpose Public Paths*. 2nd ed. Washington DC: Rail-to-Trails Conservancy.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. 1998. "An Introduction to TEA-21 and Trails." <http://www.railtrails.org/istgen.html> Accessed January 14, 2000.

Ryan, Vernon D. 1994. "Community Development and the Ever Elusive 'Collectivity'". *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 25 (1): 1-19.

Salamon, Sonja. 1989. "What Makes Rural Communities Tick?" *Rural Development Perspectives*. 5(3): 19-24.

Salamon, Sonya and Karen Davis-Brown. 1991. "Social Capital Generation and Community Cohesion." Paper presented at the annual Rural Sociological Society meeting, Columbus, Ohio.

Salamon, Sonya, Richard L. Farnsworth, and Jody A. Rendziak. 1998. "Is Locally Led Conservation Planning Working? A Farm Town Case Study." *Rural Sociology*. 63 (2): 214-234.

Sanders, Irwin T. 1961. "The Stages of a Community Controversy: The Case of Fluoridation." *The Journal of Social Issues*. 17(4): 55-65.

Scott, John. 1991. *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook.* London: Sage Publications.

Simmel, Georg. 1955. *Conflict.* Translated by Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press.

Slater, Philip E. 1970. *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Smelser, Neil. 1967. "Beachtown: A Case Study in Community Change." Pp. 674-685 in *Sociology: An Introduction,* edited by Neil Smelser. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Strong, Ann L. 1975. *Private Property and the Public Interest: The Brandywine Experience.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports. Series P23-189. *Population Profile of the United States: 1995*. 1995. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington DC. <http://www.census.gov/population/pop-profile/p23-189.pdf> Accessed August 5, 1999.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1990. Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3. <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsTable?... > Accessed March 18, 2001.

U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998. Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands of the Committee on Resources, House of Representative, 105th Congress. First session on H.R. 2438. October 30, 1997. Washington DC. Serial No. 105-76.

Vidich, Arthur J. and Joseph Bensman. 1968. *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Wacquant, Lois D. 1997. "Negative Social Capital: State Breakdown and Social Destitution in America's Urban Core." Paper presented at the Rural Sociological Society, Toronto, Canada.

Wallace, Walter.1971. *The Logic of Science in Sociology*. Chicago: Aldine Atherton, Inc.

Wellman, B., P.J. Carrington, and A. Hall. 1988. "Networks as Personal Communities" Pp. 130-184 in *Social Structures: A Network Approach*, edited by B. Wellman and S.D. Berkowitz. New York: Cambridge University Press.